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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF MARGOT ASQUITH

2 Vols.

## PLACES AND PERSONS







*From a Camera portrait by Hay Wrightson.*

*Margaret Asquith*



# PLACES & PERSONS

*By*

## MARGOT ASQUITH

(Countess of Oxford and Asquith)



THORNTON BUTTERWORTH LTD.  
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A LITTLE JOURNEY  
TO EGYPT 1891



# A LITTLE JOURNEY TO EGYPT

1891

## CHAPTER I

### LONDON TO BRINDISI

*Farewells at Victoria Station—Rheims Cathedral—Champagne making—Milan Cathedral—Rome—St. Peter's—The Vatican—Sistine Chapel—Lord Dufferin and the Embassy—Naples—The Museum—Pompeii—Harry Cust.*

13th November, 1891.—We settled it was impossible to let papa off—though he objected to the last moment, and when asked by Arthur Balfour on Wednesday, 11th, at dinner, how he felt, he said, “As well as a man going to be executed can feel.”

Having filled a bag and basket with every sort of thing—from old letters and books to powder and a button-hook—Lucy and I drove to Victoria Station together, and Evan Charteris, Spencer Lyttleton, Sir Algernon West, Ernest Crawley, Charty, and Ribblesdale said good-bye to us.

We had a fair crossing and an excellent meal with M. Bocher. He had a reserved carriage locked up for us from Calais. Papa read a book by Amelia Edwards on Egypt, Mamma perused Dante, and I finished *Madame de Rémusat*. We all slept on and off.

RHEIMS.—We arrived here at 8.15 this morning. Mamma told me she had left her purse and diary behind her, but this did not annoy her except for a moment. We went to see the cathedral when we had finished our coffee and rolls. It is very beautiful, and finer outside than anything I ever saw—except, perhaps, Lincoln. I have seen finer environments and finer interiors; but for imagination, boldness and detail, I can hardly fancy anything more wonderful. It is as strong and severe in its decay as a skull, and has all the elegance and refinement of old Venetian point lace on the wedding gown of some great lady. There was a wailing funeral service going on and a large congregation of praying people and mumbling priests. The altar was hidden by black merino, and much of the architecture was swathed in black. The coloured glass starring the roof flashed like gems upon our eyes. Mamma and I knelt and said our prayers. I felt far from home. Papa looked at many very poor pictures of Christ upon the Cross, objecting in a critical spirit to the way they were hung.

In the afternoon we went to see a Monsieur Bauer, to whom we had had a letter of introduction from a great wine merchant. He was a courteous and intelligent German, who spoke all languages, and took great trouble to show us the cellars and the whole process of champagne making. After this, he took us to his office, and insisted on our tasting two bottles of exceptionally dry champagne, which I thought excellent. We drank his health and asked him to join us in our drive round the town.



Rheims is old and scattered, with a fine town hall and some interesting churches. It trades largely with England, and has woollen factories. Papa would talk his French, which was not half as good as M. Bauer's English. He told us that the last two *good* years for champagne were 1880 and 1887. He said to me, "Although I have been twenty-five years in France, I have never met one *entirely sincere* Frenchman."

MILAN, 16th November.—We arrived here at 9 to-night, having left Rheims for Lucerne yesterday at 9.20 a.m. It was a glorious night: the lake shimmering in an ecstasy of moon and stars; the town misty and breathless, and the high throbbing electric lights added to the blue darkness. I stood on the balcony of the Grand Hotel and watched the reflections in the flat lake. I finished the first volume of the *Memoirs of Marbot*—an interesting and direct account of Napoleon's engagements.

Had it not been for the scenery, I should have got on with the second volume; but it is a big book, though quickly read. It was a relief to get to the other side of the St. Gothard Tunnel and find the country steeped in a snowy fog. One hundred interruptions of castles, churches, ravines, "bits" here, "openings" there, "torrents" and "lakes" everywhere had kept me in a continual dance. We were also under obligation to a civil and enthusiastic fellow-traveller, who knew every inch of the route, and even supplied us with maps. Papa had been foolish enough to try several languages on him asking if the railway paid, as: "We seem to be the only first-class travellers," he said.

Mamma was deep in a book on Egyptology, given to Papa by Ribblesdale. She was awed and attracted by the dimensions of the statues and obelisks, one of whose feet alone she told me measured six foot. 'It seems frightful! Just think, Margot, it is bigger than you!'

Dimensions are always puzzling, and convey nothing at all to my mind, and I was deep in Austerlitz. Papa pleased me more by telling me that the second book Caxton had printed was a rhymed treatise upon hunting (translated by Berners), but this was a serious interruption, and conveyed my thoughts to Easton Grey and my horses, from thence to Leicestershire, ending with Mashonaland and Peter Flower. He soon tired of this, and being in great form began pointing out the beauties of Como, and a sky which was, unfortunately, clearing up. He pretended he would like to live in "a little house just like that," pointing to the white unpretentious architecture we were constantly passing. I retorted that none of them would hold even his letters. Mamma teased him very deliciously. We dined at 6.15, and read till bed-time.

ROME, 17th November.—We got up early to see Milan Cathedral. It is white and spiritual-looking outside, but it is largely faked inside and the false roof jars upon me. Papa spoke at the top of his voice while all the people were praying. I have come to the conclusion that he has really immense moral sentiment, a good deal of artistic sentiment, and no religious sentiment whatever; awe is unknown to him.

We got into the train at 9, and arrived here at 11.30. I finished the second volume of *Marbot*,

which is long. I read the last fifty pages standing up near the lamp as it shook less, and the daylight had been considerably diminished by forty-nine tunnels on the sea-coast. Papa said, "Oh! those envious tunnels!" As our eyes squinted first with the dazzling sunlight and dancing water, and seemed to fade and become extinct with the dim lamp and stuffy interior of our compartment, we began to feel irascible and exhausted. Papa told me about the Devon and Consul Copper Mine, whose shares went from £1 to £1,000, which interested me enormously, and he told it extremely well.

ROME, 18th November.—On arriving at 11.10 a.m., tired and dirty, I wrote to Mr. Rennell Rodd and Lord Dufferin to tell them we were here, and in the morning Harry Cust and Rodd came to fetch us and show us Rome. Lord Dufferin asked us to dine with him, but, luckily, we leave the day he invited us, as dining out after sightseeing is trying. I made an appointment to see him the next day, and we had a long, excellent talk.

We started our touring by going to see St. Peter's. I have been fortunate enough to hear Rome poorly described, so I am enthralled by it all. I had no idea that the approach to St. Peter's was so splendid, the colonnade and steps so vast, and everything such a beautiful colour. St. Paul's in London has more quiet, and many cathedrals have more reverence; but none of them could express more triumph. It is not prayers but cheers, a kind of golden hurrah shouted up to heaven. It is too large to love, too bright to see, and too big to criticize. People have their own architecture like their own colour, and mine

is not Roman ; but I have no fetters in taste and with all its faults I still see the greatness of St. Peter's. The high altar is the ugliest specimen of tortured taste that I ever saw in my life. The finest thing in the whole church is Michael Angelo's Virgin holding the dead Christ in her lap. Such a lovely little *woman's* face, such unquestioning resignation and sorrowing sympathy, and the long bony body of Christ full of feeling !

As usual, I passed a funeral : I am pursued by funerals—which is so unnecessary, as I never forget death, not for one moment of the day. The chants of monks and the thud of the long procession woke me up. I ran on to the balcony in my dressing-gown, and saw the cross carried down the flaring Parisian street of modern Rome by white-cowled brothers, brown monks, and sisters of charity ; the coffin followed, and a host of mourners, and carriages of wreaths and flowers rolled out of sight.

After seeing a service at St. Peter's, and hearing fine music, we went over the Vatican. At first, it looks like one row of cottages on the top of the other—little yellow houses put upon each other at different angles, with small windows, the whole building peering above a strong wall. But when you walk past the striped guards, up the stairs, and see the amount of courtyards, and rooms of frescoes and statues, you cannot connect the interior with what you see looking up from outside. The Sistine chapel and Michael Angelo's ceiling are feasts of beauty, but so difficult to see that it made my eyes ache. The figure of Adam in the Creation is a perfection of line, and the little squatting woman at

his feet with prophetic eyes and light green suit is very fascinating. Michael Angelo's imagination is almost too male and muscular, and though not as beautiful as his men, he makes women like women. He looked upon men as athletes and women as mothers. Of the sculpture I liked the torso with "Apollonius" printed underneath it most of all. There is benediction in the attitude and yet power enough to kill, and nothing but one's fancy to decide which he is doing. I don't care for the Apollo Belvedere, but there is a beautiful young athlete at the end of a long hall which is called the Apoxyomenus.

We lunched at a pothouse off macaroni and salad, and then drove to the Colosseum, the Forum, and the Capitol. I was spellbound with wonder and depression at the ruins of such greatness and glory. The earth seems to have sighed *so* deeply that she shook off all her ornaments. A few fine columns, like tiaras on faded faces, some remnant of joyous nobility—still stand erect and beautiful; but there is a look of fatality about the whole place which haunted me, and I never saw a *sadder town*. Not all the noise of newness, or all the remade gaiety of modern buildings and boulevards, theatres, and promenades can really touch the central current of Rome, the deep "noiseless current." It is dead and only the ghosts live. At every corner you feel the futility of men, and hear the faint, repeated echoes of laughter. A little child gambols over the broken pavement, and you feel the greatness of God. We walked up the steps to the Capitol, and saw the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, with his

kind old face, and hand stretched out to bless the town.

We drove out to St. Paul's, a very fine, modern church, with four rows of grey marble pillars, and no seats at all—more like a banqueting hall or a Senate house.

Harry Cust and Rennell Rodd were with us all the time. I discussed modern politics with the latter and the Rape of the Sabines with the former. Then we drove up the Pincian Hill, and looked at the outline of Rome against a scarlet and saffron sky. There were a black ilex avenue and a round stone fountain; then a low wall, which we leant over, and gazing at the dome of St. Peter's, I said my prayers.

We called upon the Slades on our way home; and found the Colonel tired out with nursing his little girl, and a governess who had gone mad. The room was dark, and full of photographs. I saw an old one of Charty and one of me, and a lot of Woolwich and Aldershot groups of officers, etc. Mamma and I drove home and we dined alone. After dinner, at 11.30, our guides called for us and took us to the Colosseum, to see it by moonlight. We were silent with its beauty and size, and I could hardly sleep when we returned to bed.

*19th November.*—I went to see Lord Dufferin, and was much struck with the hideous taste of the Embassy and the beauty of the garden. I had a delightful talk with Lord Dufferin. He advised me to marry; said I was too nice to be alone, and too clever not to be helping some man. He begged me not to be led away by personal attraction, and said respect was the first thing and love the second. He is very wise, but,

like all deaf people, pretends to hear, and has lost much of his social *éclat* and reply in general conversation. He said he could not look forward to the coming Radical Government, and asked me about my Gladstone visit. Papa and Mamma picked me up, and we went on to the Capitol with Harry and Rennell Rodd. There are some fine things there, notably the heads of the emperors. I was disappointed with the Gladiator, admired the bronze centaurs, bas-reliefs, bits of scrolls, and some of the tombs with stolid faces weighted with sorrow. We then drove along the Appian Way, and saw the Campagna and the Catacombs. I knew I could not escape the latter, though I hoped a cold in my head would protect me. I am not much of a tourist, but, after all, it is better to see everything.

We had glorious weather—not *one* bad day, nor, indeed, since we left London have we seen a cloud. Mamma, Papa, and I dined with the Slades. I sat next to Dr. Axel Munthe, whose *Letters from a Mourning City* were translated by Maude White. I found him original and interesting, full of fancy, with a kind of lurid humour. We got on well as I recognized quickly what he was like.

20th November.—Dr. Munthe called, and drove me to the Pantheon, which I thought remarkably ugly inside. We went to two or three other churches, and then he took me to see the room in which Keats died. The doctor lives in a regular rabbit warren—a mixture of his early taste in stuffs and velvets and his latter fancy for simplicity. Books, bronzes, religious relics, and medical problems, square chairs and morbid French landscapes make up his interior. He

is an artist and a poet ; he said I had flown across his path like a little brilliant bird that comes quite close and then flies away ; that I surprised him and brought him back to life ; but that he wished he had met me before I was spoilt. I assured him I was quite unchanged ; as I was born with what he guessed he minded in me and had in no way improved ! He said my brain worked at lightning speed, and added that I must now think his indifferent English precluded him from being an excellent judge either of character or intellect. He took me to the station where he kissed my hands.

We arrived at Naples at 7.30, and were joined by Cust and Rodd who were staying in the same hotel, having left Rome by the night train. Our hotel was on the quay, and I woke up to the sound of waves blown up in the night. I went out on the balcony, and nodded to the jabbering flower boys below, holding up large bunches of yellow and pink roses to me. This greeting brought one of them upstairs, and we gave the little blackguard two francs for roses, which we observed were sold all over the streets for fourpence.

I never saw such a compound of squalor and idleness, gaiety, dirt, noise, and colour, as Naples. Everything is done in the street—dressing, cooking, washing ; cows milked, boots cleaned, men shaved, girls sewing and singing, or brushing each other's hair. Everyone begs ; match-girls, flower-boys and cabmen run after you ; lava, coral, tortoiseshell, are all shown and thrust at you with monkey gestures, and in a harsh voice they call out : “ Var' cheap ! var' cheap !! ” The clothes and cloths that hang



out of the windows play and plait in the wind across the narrow slums. The harness of the ponies is lovely—and there is a little figure to keep off the evil eye in the centre of their forehead bands. The drivers scream at each other and race together, or stop to get a light from each other's cigars, quite regardless of either you or time. We drove to the Museum, and for two hours I was intensely happy. The Narcissus thrills one by his grace; and the Mercury with his serious, alert face and lovely darting figure. Every bronze is a masterpiece, and would appeal to quite ordinary people. You want nothing on your side to see such asserting beauty; all criticism is silenced, and you can only wonder at people tolerating anything ugly near them again.

There are disadvantages as well as advantages in being as sensitive to form and to beauty as I am. Want of grace influences my opinion of people, and nervous clumsiness makes me cold with impatience. I am fairly quick myself, but I don't think I upset things. I don't step on dogs, trip over carpets, or waste a hundred matches before lighting a candle or a cigarette, nor do I spill champagne, or prick my fingers. It is not caution, but accuracy and scrupulosity. Papa tries me very highly with lunch in the train and at all meals, as he is so hasty: he drops his pear upon the railway floor, and coffee on his clothes. He eats everything except what he doesn't like, and then says, "I am obliged to be a little careful, you see" (when rejecting some Continental contrivance of rice and indiarubber). I chaff him about this; he has the quickest, but the most generous temper I ever saw. Mamma and I had a slight tiff in the

Cameo room of the Museum. I said I felt nothing on seeing cameos as they did not appeal to my sense of beauty, at which she replied—in a nursery formula—“ If you had to make one you would admire them soon enough.” I pointed out that manual labour, while commanding my respect, in no way increased my admiration, and would turn indifference into dislike if I were the toiler. I felt quite cross and hated myself for it afterwards. Apart from this, we have been perfectly *d'accord* and wonderfully happy together.

In the afternoon Harry and Rennell took us to Pompeii. It rained a little, and was rather tiring walking on the flagged streets ; but it is wonderful to see. One room was painted that lovely earthy red, and decorated like a Louis XVI *escritoire*, with wreaths and bows in green and gold. In another—all fragments, with no roof, and the rain blowing down the court—I saw a rose-tree in full blossom. We picked maidenhair at the foot of a Corinthian column and I sent some of it in a letter to Evan.

We waited one hour at the station, as the trains in Italy keep the most fantastic times. We all dined together, and I quarrelled with H. Cust over Victor Hugo ; I rather gave away my case by exaggeration. We are on the defensive with each other over literature, as he thinks me a fool, and this is irritating ; but he takes nothing really seriously—above all, his friends. He is seriously in love, but does not love seriously.

## CHAPTER II

### BRINDISI TO CAIRO

*We board the P. & O. ship Bokhara—Travelling Companions—Alexandria—The Khedive's Palace—Life in Cairo—Sightseeing—Mosques and Bazaars—A polite dragoman—The Feast of Hasán and Husain.*

*Sunday, 22nd November, 1891.*—We left Naples at 6.30 and had an endless journey to Brindisi, starting with eight in a carriage. I heard a Neapolitan Jew, after gazing at me, say to his friend that I was charming. He spoke in dialect, but one wants no interpreter for this kind of language. I had a cold in my head and chest, and my hair felt heavy. Thanks to Papa preferring to listen to Cook's man, who met us at the station, instead of our courier Corelli, we were bundled into a 'bus with eight people in it, and there we waited an hour till everyone had reclaimed their luggage. As there were two ships and several 'buses, a stormy confusion raged between the passengers. Oaths in every language, and a jumble of Italian, French, English, and American voices reached our ears. We all sat passive, while the porters peered into the railway carriages. At last, after a tedious wait, we drove to the P. & O. ship *Bokhara*—a long, jolty drive. We climbed up the slanting board of a

moderate-sized ship, and I was greeted by the old familiar smell of smuts and oil, steam and noise. A highly-fringed stewardess, with a superior manner, showed us four berths—a small, ugly, narrow room with three beds in it which Mamma and I had to ourselves. A row of mustard-coloured wooden basins on an upper shelf above my head did not restore my confidence. The water-bottles and the washhand-stands looked dirty, and the beds were iron-hard. We washed as well as we could, and turned into an endless dining-room, where we sat down on each side of the first officer—the sort of man I never meet—small, with clear eye and yellow hair, indifferent and civil, with a scanty laugh and business-like way of eating or refusing. He was neither stupid nor vulgar, clever nor refined, just a simple everyday man. After eating soup and chicken we went to bed, arranging shawls under the sheets. My bed, which was under the window, commanded a searching draught, and our door shut imperfectly ; but as the ship was still and we were tired, we dozed off : suddenly we were awakened by the most awful noises ; doors banging, people talking, every voice on each side distinctly heard—only thin planks between the cabins—porters, people, and baggage overhead, which went on most of the night. Huge boxes and cases were dragged along over our heads, and bumped down sometimes one bump, sometimes three or four for each box ; there must have been at least a hundred, and feet going all the time, with shouts and screams. That night was my idea of hell ! At 6.15 I felt a longer drag than the others, and then three little muffled bumps, and I knew the ship had started on the smooth

harbour water. By this time the sun was flooding the water, and illuminating our cabin, so that sleep was out of the question. Then the plates were laid and breakfast began to be prepared, more feet moving, china smashing, and, thanks to the motion of the ship, our door was perpetually bursting open.

*Monday, 23rd November.*—Our stewardess came in at 7.40 with tea, and I felt as if I had never been in bed at all. We got up after 10 ; the sea was still, and I went to have a big bath of hot salt water, with a strong smell of oily steam in it. I had a foot-pan of fresh water to soap with. The screw below the bath made me feel as if I had no inside worth mentioning. We all went on deck, where I tried to read ; but the wind was just enough to make this tiresome, and whichever side I chose to sit on was smutty ; so I walked up and down and examined the other people—a tiresome lot of faces of the type one sees at stations, or *table d'hôte*, or in the English churches abroad. One nice-looking man—Captain Martyr, in the Egyptian army, and rather a pretty, airified American woman with a challenging walk and complacent face. After walking up and down with Papa, I went to my cabin and wrote this Diary, sitting on a low box, and putting my ink and paper on the bed, a shrill draught all around me, and the throb of the engine underneath. We lunched at one, and Papa talked to an American lady, while Mamma and I ate curried eggs. I began to feel ill in the middle of lunch, and went to bed directly after, without exactly undressing. There was hardly a motion ; but my head ached, and I lay still for two hours, then making an effort went on deck and found Papa with a huge cigar, playing quoits, and was

introduced to his new friends—Captain Martyr, in the Egyptian army, who cursed sea voyages, and a nice Mrs. and Major Fenwick, in the Cairo police. I made myself agreeable, but I felt too ill to stay, so went to bed and talked to the stewardess, and soon found out all her history. It was a curious one, reminding me of a Whyte-Melville's novel, *The White Rose*. A flashy garrison girl, who comes to a poor end. She had been engaged to a man, "hev'ry hinch the very hessence of a gentleman"; but she ran away from him, and married a good-for-nothing who had attracted her. He beat and ruined her, and died of a "g'y life" (gay life). He was a splendid-looking man, "big-grown with a black beard"; and an awful blackguard. She had "a hodd thousand or more," but he had spent it all, etc. With this kind of talk I got through the evening of the 23rd.

*Thursday, 26th November.*—We arrived in Alexandria at 7 a.m., after a hot, sleepless night. Lovely sunrise; the Khedive's palace, a white building with flat roof, rising out of a violet sea, looked particularly Oriental. Fearful jabbering and confusion of dragomen and luggage, fly-men, pilots, soldiers, policemen, children, screams, and perspiration! We gave up the first train, and drove round the town to a garden full of roses and date-palms; passing a lot of handsome white donkeys, Arabs, and people of all sorts, some in white hoods, others in turbans and fezzes, or tarbouches, as I think they are called. They are a nation of great manners over here. The bow the gardener gave me, as if apologising for his gift of roses, was splendid, full of grace and dignity. But the poor are hideous!—the women like

mummies covered with flies and children like dolls of rags. We passed a tent in which an Arab wedding was going on, and long, low, minor music accompanied it. Our dragoman, whose English wanted interpretation, said, "One Arab take one woman—music—you see."

Masses of dirty earth and cabbages ; horrible dogs wandering disconsolately about ; dromedaries, goats, buffaloes, starved cows, and skeletons of horses ; men and women smoking, squatting, and washing, and I saw no grass. We had lunch at the Hotel Khedive. I took up the *Egyptian Gazette*, and read the death of Lord Lytton ; was much shocked and wrote to Lady Betty.

We travelled to Cairo, leaving Alexandria at four ; arrived in Cairo at eight and drove in a char-à-banc to the hotel. My eyes, though extinct with fatigue, dwelt with delight on so much that was beautiful and unexpected in the Hotel.

Luigi, the proprietor, is a genius I can see. I found three letters for me from Sir Algy West, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Milner.

CAIRO, HOTEL CONTINENTAL, 27th November.—I slept badly, as I hate coarse, unbleached sheets, and iron-hard pillows, and mosquito nets—make me feel hot. Got up at 3 a.m., found nothing to do ; opened the windows and went to bed again ; slept fitfully till six. Mr. Milner called and took us to a mosque at 10.30. I like to talk to him, though he makes me feel a little too dependent on information to talk really well. Arthur Balfour has precisely the opposite effect. The fact is, I do *not* know enough, and all the imaginative insight in the world will not serve

instead of knowledge to eighty out of a hundred people. I had a fascinating drive through the big streets and bye-ways, under the highest of light blue skies and a lovely sun ; groups of graceful, idle, slovenly Arabs sat or lolled, with lithe limbs, and folded gowns gathered round their arms and legs in coloured beauty of violet, blue and white. White here seems to have brown shadows, like Munkacsy's pictures. Sloping, shuffling camels with tragic faces slipped silently past with men on their backs, carrying babies and bundles, all wrapped in dust. The people here are always tired, and always dirty. The riders seem to be part of their mounts ; they move with the uneven paces of camels or donkeys, and sit on their backs with or without either reins or stirrups. The white donkeys with their poor heads tightly tied up are magnificent. I went up to one grinning Arab boy and loosed his donkey's head, to his vast amusement ; he bowed—touching his head and breast—and I smiled my apology.

The Mosque was curious and savage. A stone stair outside (such as you see in an English granary), with steep steps—four or five—and wide, sloping, dark stone passages, with badly-paved floors and odd dark corners. I passed a few beggars sitting with their heads on their knees, and women with their faces turned to the wall, and their babies sitting straddled on their shoulders. We came to a wooden bar about two feet off the ground, and a row of Turkish slippers under the bar. These were tied on over our shoes by squatting black men of no distinguishable race, after which we went into the interior of the Mosque. It was a wild-looking place, open at the roof, with a



round stone fountain, or pond, covered in by a sort of baldaquin with three steps round it where the worshippers were washing their feet and stomachs : farther on there was a single step leading to a sort of alcove, showing the road to Mecca, inlaid with Moorish marble of faded colours, originally, I dare say, very fine, but all out of repair, broken off with a streak of turquoise stone, like an ember in a dead fire. No altar except this corner, but a pulpit for the preacher, and a raised square place like an idealised cabman's shelter, where a man reads from the Koran all the time. It was Friday—the Arab Sunday—and service was going on. Men, on bits of matting, kneeling with their foreheads upon the ground, turned towards the east, and the brown soles of their feet made a long line.

In the afternoon Mr. Milner took us to the pony races, where we saw Cairo society, and were introduced to the Barings and Grenfells, etc. Sir Evelyn struck me as a man of stature, and I am sure Lady Grenfell is a great lady. She is wonderfully agreeable, with a small waist, and her husband big, genial and oriental in appearance. The race-course is lovely, surrounded by palm trees ; and in the evening the citadel above Cairo looked peach colour, with the faint afterglow.

*28th November.*—We went to the bazaars and bought silks and embroideries. Papa became rather impatient. I don't care about shopping with a man ; although I am not very feminine as regards shopping. I don't like it, and never go except as an accompaniment to someone else. I bought a Sais's dress to dance in, and a little blue savage-looking ornament.

In the afternoon I rode on Captain Martyr's pony with Major Fenwick. It was a funny little pony, an Arab, with short shoulders, a hard mouth and the stumbling gait of a thoroughly bad hack. It trotted as if it had a cart behind it. We rode through the town to the race-course, which we galloped round. Papa played golf on bad ground, and I got home late and hot, to find Mrs. — anxious to take me to Lady Grenfell's "afternoon." I dived into a bath and my clothes, and went to write our names at the Barings'. Mrs. —, a most good-natured sort of woman, told me several times she was not a "big person in Cairo, but enjoyed herself all the same." I listened absently. She asked me what I should do if I were placed in the same dilemma as she had been—the General's wife had, or had not called on her, should she or should she not, call upon the General's wife, or some such problem. I felt as if I had been translated into a society novel such as those sold for "light reading" on a railway stall—*Cut by the County* or *Ought we to Visit Her?*

Mr. Milner took us to the Opera in the evening, and we saw a French company perform *Le Barbier de Seville*. Italian music is insultingly obvious, and has no argument whatever. Between the airs—which are pretty—there is insignificant padding, which is irritating to a musical person.

*Sunday, 29th November.*—I got up late, having had a bad night. Nervous of the animal world, hot and exhausted, I lay awake, thinking of a hundred things, till four a.m. I went to church with Mamma and Papa in the morning and soldiers showed us into our pews. We heard an excellent sermon. The

clergyman said the reaction from a Puritan hell into modern heaven turned God from good into good-natured or words to that effect. He quoted Buckle and Tennyson and yet spoke quite simply and directly. After lunch, Captain Martyr drove with us to the University Mosque—quite the most marvellous sight I have ever seen. Thousands of men and boys in groups on the floor, learning the Koran, some learning by themselves, others round a professor; all speaking at once, and swaying to and fro; rings of children that made me giddy to watch, all jabbering their lessons. Some men, entirely covered up, like graceful corpses, sleeping on the floor; others on their little matting or piece of carpet, praying. It was large and low, full of pillars like a crypt, with flat stone roof and straw matting, and an alcove to Mecca. It was a religious University, and not one word of what they learn there, I am told, is of the slightest use to them; but the same teaching has gone on for generations and generations. The effect of light from the openings in the roof between the grey pillars on these myriad of sitting figures was immensely striking. I saw some fine intellectual faces among the teachers; they looked clean, interested, and un-selfconscious.

Mr. Alfred Milner took me for a long drive up the Nile. The loveliest effect I ever saw was the sailing-ships, with their bent poles, and sails furled round them, like the petals of a flower when the sun goes down, all closed round in a kind of close virginity, white and beautiful; the masts shooting up into a red-rose sky, with purple bars across and, as it were, preventing the palm trees from catching fire. We walked and drove in turns and had a memorable talk.

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He has a very rare mind. Without being a humorous man, he has a fine sense of humour ; and if he likes you enough to forgive your spontaneity, you expand and feel remarkably at your ease with him. The Nile was full of twinkle, reproducing the sunset with a smile.

*Monday, 30th November.*—Mamma not well. There is something in the Cairo air that is a trifle upsetting. She stayed in bed, and Papa went to a gun shop with Captain Besant, to see about his gun and cartridges for the Nile. I don't know what he will shoot unless a camel or a crocodile ! I took the opportunity to buy some Arab silky cottons for my maid to make me a shirt. I took my dragoman, whose face reminded me of my groom, Frost ; rather darker in colour than the regular Egyptian ; very clean and well dressed. He bargained for me, and said I was so "fine and kind" because "I smile at the natives, and they all loved me"—which was a sort of blarney. He took me to a scent shop, and the man—squatting, as they all do here in their open booths—begged me to sit down. It was like a little stage, and I sat where the footlights ought to have come, and dangled my feet over a raised edge. He opened several big bottles, and, taking my hand, turned my sleeve up, and rubbed my wrist with a pungent smell of violets and syrup, and then kissed my wrist with infinite grace. I bought violets and attar of roses in pretty bottles, and bowing low he gave me incense for a present. I departed, holding my white skirt rather close, as the jostle of children, donkeys, women, flies, watermen, and beggars in the native bazaar is stifling, and you have an idea that so much



*Alfred Milner 1897*

LORD MILNER



hot dirt must beget disease. The children came and touched me, and stared, and ran away, as if I were too clean to be real. They are all like great babies and very easily amused.

After lunch, I went for a ride with my friend of the boat, who kindly mounted me on an Arab three-year-old—small and slippery, but full of vitality, and moved like oil. He took me to the desert, beyond the powder-magazine, through the suburbs of Cairo and stray buildings to the Khedives' tombs. We seemed to be riding on rock sprinkled with sand, very hard, uneven and dull; loose stones all over the place. Major Fenwick was not prejudiced by this; and when we were a little less upon the rock and more upon the sand, we started full tilt, passing a travelling party of donkeys, right up over a rise of the ground, till we got to a flattish top, from which we had a marvellous view of the Nile stretching below us in a tan-coloured desert. We saw three foxes, two like cats, sunning themselves in the rocks, and the third, stealing along under the tombs. I could not have "halloed" to save my life, though they were just like English foxes, big and swift, with grey hairs in their coats. We had to pick out our way here and there, as the ground was cut out into chalk pits. The Jewish cemetery from a distance looked rather pathetic, as Arabs do not allow a Jew to be buried in Cairo, and sometimes the police have to protect Jewish funerals. There is an extraordinary fascination galloping silently along the desert—a feeling of warm, still desolation. The palm-trees thrust their copper lances into the sky, and burst into green as they get near the sun. The citadel looked like the

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background of a religious picture, with a pink and lilac setting, each angle reflecting a different colour, like the facets of a jewel. An occasional camel and group of Bedouins slipped noiselessly past, and I felt as if I had intruded upon the Old Testament.

In the evening Mr. Milner and Captain Besant dined with us, and then Papa, he, and I drove in an open carriage into the bazaars, where there was a feast they called Mulid el Hasain,\* which was most curious. The native population were in the streets, and every shop, booth and stage (as I call them) was illuminated ; the houses were joined by small, square red flags, with a white pattern.

As there are no pavements to distinguish where to walk and where to drive, and the crowd was immense and highly excited, driving was dangerous. The people work themselves up by swaying to and fro, beating gongs and singing monotonous chants, which tone in well with the native colouring; everything is in a minor key with endless repetition. I can imagine being hypnotised by the sound and the swing of an Arab crowd. The sharp, sudden scream of a lunatic as he passes with his arms up and his mouth open makes you start. He will stop and smile at you, with an air half savage and half friendly. We saw women dancing in a revolting way, shaking their stomachs and bosoms, while keeping their heads still ; their eyes were painted till they glowed like snakes ; naked to the waist with a sort of heavy broidery skirt caught up to show a cotton-stockinged leg which gave an air of squalor. They hold themselves beautifully, and their necks are straight and strong from carrying

\* The feast of Hasain and Husain.



weights. We got out of the carriage and walked down a dark alley to look at a Persian carpet-shop. Mr. Milner knew the man, and they handed us up on to the stage, and offered us tea. I had my short, red Spanish gown on, and a diamond at my throat, which I saw two Israelites staring at. I wore a black hat and my blue and sable cloak. We all sat on chairs. Mr. Milner in his tarbouche looked quite Oriental. We had glasses of strong black tea—very good—and I felt as if I were acting the heroine at amateur theatricals, only the people passing at our feet were not taking any interest in the play. We shook hands, and smiled, and went away. When Mr. Milner asked how trade was going on, the old shopman answered, “Much business—small profits.” The usual Cairo lie, as I hear they coin money in the carpet shops.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NILE

*The Nile—Cook's steamer "Rameses"—Donkey rides—Memphis—English and Foreigners compared—Assiout.*

THE NILE, COOK'S STEAMER *Rameses*, 1st December, 1891.—We embarked at ten, armed with roses presented by the hotel-keeper. The Continental Hotel is the best I have ever seen in any country—bathroom, bedrooms, lighting and ventilation perfect. Our *salon* was beautiful, hung with satins and embroideries that filled my eye. I wish I did not set so much store by beauty ; I could look at a bright colour or a fine design for hours.

If I were surrounded by the right colouring and allowed to ride, read and make love in the sun, I could be intensely happy. I was born out of doors, but, though a gipsy in some ways, I know no one upon whom dirt, ugliness, discomfort, and unpunctuality jar so much. A mixture of city clerk or post-office woman and a wandering circus girl.

I felt in watching my parents what a wonderful cross they made. As a family, we ought to be more remarkable. The refinement and gentle unworldliness—mixed with originality—of Mamma ; her

sensitive shrinking from moral responsibility and decisions of any kind ; her social diffidence, unselfishness, and reserve—all fit and modify Papa's abundant vitality and fearlessness ; his push, un-selfconsciousness, and unreflecting remarks are too simple to offend. He has the sweetest and most generous temper, and the finest kind of nature—incapable of hurting anyone's feelings—too busy, too healthy, too fond, and full of life to feel anything morbidly. His activities have through circumstances developed sides of which his children know nothing ; but we are all more like him than Mamma in our energy and geniality to strangers and servants. The boys have more of Mamma's self-effacing reserve, but we have Papa's confidence and hope ; I regret to say we have missed the beauty of my mother's family, and I cannot share her view that this is a good thing as—"it protects one from temptation."

This ship or boat is a model of clean, wise arrangement ; good berths, a fine deck, and shaded from the sun. It is expensive and beautifully done. As there are about thirty passengers, with room for eighty, we each have a double berth to ourselves.

The Nile is still, nothing upsets on it, not even my interior, which is saying a good deal. My temples rumble a little, but, on the whole, I feel well. The air is like Scotland on a September day—clear, strong and lively. Though I trembled in anticipation of this journey, I know I shall enjoy myself. You cannot escape draughts on a ship—of that I am sure ; and I doubt if people read much on a yacht. I wrapped up warmly, and read Wallis Budge's book on the

Nile (with which Mr. Cook presents all his passengers), which teaches one a great deal. I also read an article in *Blackwood* on evacuating Egypt—extremely reliable and sensible. As a party cry it is wicked, as well as foolish, to talk of evacuating Egypt. Gladstone is as ignorant of the true state of this country as a child is of matches ; and his foreign policy is insular to a degree. What with Salisbury's want of tact and Gladstone's party squibs, Egypt is likely to become a great difficulty to us.

After an early lunch, we landed at Bedresheyna, and mounted on donkeys to ride to Memphis and Sakkara. The row and crowd of donkey-boys, all keen to tell you of their donkeys' merits was deafening. " Ah ! Ha ! Here ! Var' good—all right, gallop fast ! Yah ! Ha ! Speak English, he," etc.

I selected a small white donkey, with his mane painted orange, that proved to be an angel ; quick and sensitive to my heel, he threaded his way along a towing-path, between two cultivated swamps, where men and boys were working without clothes. We rode many miles, a party of twenty off the ship. I was quite happy, on a comfortable saddle of Cook's, riding my fleet little donkey.

We saw the remains of Memphis, and the colossal statue of Rameses II, forty-eight feet in height, but it was lying down, and we climbed a scaffolding to see its gigantic face, and the serpent, which is the symbol of Royalty, on its diadem. We passed some old, ugly, and not very high pyramids, and the Sakkara—the burial-ground of the ancient Egyptians—which are like so many sandy holes. One donkey fell, and the

gentleman flew over his head. At first I thought mine would, as the ground was too rough for his little pattering feet ; but he never stumbled once, and we went on to the Serapeum, or Apis Mausoleum, where the sacred bulls at Memphis were buried—great granite sarcophagi, which we descended underground to see. We walked down endless corridors in a stifling atmosphere breathed by thousands of tourists (unchangeable as the catacombs) and quite unventilated. The place was lit by the tallow dips, which we held.

The only beauty I saw was a tomb of some great Ruler (3500 B.C.), a stone room covered with faint bas-reliefs of him and his wife and various animals. The Ruler, very big, and his wife sitting at his feet clasping one of his calves, with little figures of his retainers all round him. The donkeys, geese, birds crocodiles, cats, etc., all beautifully drawn ; they might have been done yesterday ; every nostril and claw was raised in fine stone. The Ruler and his wife were coloured ; a sort of Pompeian red was smeared all over their wide-shouldered, slim-waisted bodies.

We returned at four, and as I was full of desert sand, I had a bath. I went on deck and watched the wonderful river. It is full of turns and bends, and the banks are beautiful, with strips of emerald where the ground is cultivated. High pampas grass on orange sand, or plantations of palm trees standing in the water. We keep in the middle of the river, which is wide ; but we can see the banks and country clearly. The Bedouins camp in corn or sugar canes, their camels lying down round them. They live in

mud huts with no windows, like the old nursery picture books—*Beavers at Home*, or any other animal that raises mounds over its back.

The hilly outline of the horizon is what surprises me, as I always thought the desert was flat and uncultivated. The boats, filled with green rushes, have pointed sails and are wonderfully picturesque. The men standing up lazily rowing a single oar, between high bending masts. The hills on the horizon are sand, and take curious shapes. They look as if they had been made by the Egyptians, who were artists in everything except in their men and women, who lack grace and variety.

Sometimes the villages are superior—square, low, stone houses with windows, and in front of them herds of goats, donkeys and starved-looking dogs, all the colour of sand and revelling in the mud at the edge of the Nile. We saw a flock of pelicans flying into the sun, and flocks of turkeys.

I can't do anything in a draught, except walk and smoke cigarettes, or lie on a chair and think. We have breakfast at eight, lunch at one, and dinner at seven; electric light goes out at eleven, and the ship does not move at night, so I look forward to sleeping well, which I seldom did in Cairo. The air here is really creative and I feel well and happy.

*Wednesday, 2nd December.*—A quiet day; no expedition. I wrote my Diary, played the piano, and spoke to a French lady, but grudge all time wasted in talking to people that I do not feel I can listen to. I speak without saying anything, and listen without understanding. I am glad of this as I shall have

time to read and write. I began to long for England, and the grass and rain.

I never go abroad without feeling pride in my country. We are honest and trusted ; we are brave, and inspire courage, and we are cultivated and clean. If you want to flatter a Frenchman or an Austrian, you have only to say you took him for an Englishman. We women get our taste in clothes from Paris, but the French and Austrians get their clothes in London, and their tastes in sport from us. We might do well to copy the manners of the Austrians or Arabs, and imitate the French in their enunciation and cooking of vegetables. Beyond this, I never saw a country that did not tempt me to say, "Thank God I am English," or a religion that did not make me pray for others and bless my God.

There are things we lack, and perhaps always will lack—artistic enthusiasm and industry. The French are far ahead of us in these. Also, there is a fashion in our literature for confused form. We have humour, philosophy, morality and poetry in our novels, but no style. Meredith cannot be said to have *l'oreille juste*. The French are monotonously fond of one subject in their literature, but their method and style are perfect. They begin and finish at the right place ; they choose happy epithets, and do not repeat themselves or weaken their vocabulary by slang. There is an opening now in France for a healthy novelist with imagination and humour. Their books want filtering ; ours need condensing.

NILE. OFF ASSIOUT, *Thursday, 3rd December*.—Woke up feeling dull. Wrote letters to England.

We stopped and went on land to see the small tombs. My donkey, odious brute ! fell twice. I slipped off successfully each time on to my toes. Our dragoman wanted us to walk up a hot, sandy hill to see an ancient tomb, and most of the party went, but I remained, sitting on the rocks, looking over the landscape—high and green corn below and a silver line of Nile beyond, with rock hills above us ; all the donkeys and Arab boys in lazy groups waiting for their riders.

*4th December.*—Landed at Assiout at three, and went for a donkey ride. We rode through the bazaar, and I bought two yellow silk sashes, a bunch of roses, and a large dirty coffee-pot—savage and handsome, made of copper. There was a marvellous sunset, like flocks of gold birds disappearing into hell.

In the evening an old reverend gentleman challenged me to dance with him. I always thought he was a little touched in his head, and he told me that after a heavy fall he had lost his memory. He danced foolishly, but actively. I was persuaded into dancing alone with my castagnettes. I got no letters in Assiout, and could have sobbed with disappointment and boredom. My twenty-five fellow-passengers looked ugly and common, and I execrated travelling. I hate the idleness, monotony, and helplessness of a ship : the up and down ! up and down ! noise of paddles, and the unchanging ugliness of the crew. If it were not for the Arab servants, and the outlook, I should go into a consuming melancholy. Not a man here ever opens a book, except a wall-eyed professor, who speaks to no one, not even to his wife. The general talk is whether the boat *Rameses the Great*



has or has not better food, or people, or accommodation, and whether the old gentleman does not drink to inspire such activity. I assured them that he was mad enough to make him independent of any restorative.

## CHAPTER IV

### ASSIOUT, LUXOR AND ASSOUAN

*Assiout—Denderah—Luxor—Karnak—Assouan—An amusing dialogue and a gay party.*

ASSIOUT, 5th December, 1891.—No letters ! How slender one's hold upon one's friends is ! I believe, if I were to stay in Egypt a year, and die of any of the many disgusting sights here (donkeys' wounds pricked with pins ; babies' eyes eaten out by flies ; boys beaten ; horses starved, etc.), no one would miss me. One makes as much impression on people as a fly on a bun. When I read of Parnell or Lassalle, or smaller men who have arrested attention, I feel full of envy, and wish I had been born a man. In a woman all one's own internal urging is a mistake ; it leads to nothing, and breaks loose in sharp utterances and passionate overthrows of conventionality.

We walked up a hill to see the view of the town this morning, which was repaying, though I felt sore with disappointment at getting no letters. It is one of the drawbacks of ship life that, unless you lock yourself in the bathroom, or lie in your berth, you are never alone. It is as necessary for me to be alone

some part of every day, as to wash, dress, read, or ride.

*Sunday, 6th December.*—I hardly realized it was Sunday, but read the morning Psalms in Laura's prayer-book, and wondered if God did much for me. Read Duntzer's *Life of Goethe*. Extremely hot day. Papa finished *Eothen*. Hated myself for feeling so bored and depressed. Unable to write or read for wind and people. Read review of Rosebery's *Pitt*, and Traill's *Salisbury*, and an allusion to George Curzon in the *Review of Reviews*. Felt happy at thinking of my friends' advancement—Arthur Balfour and George Curzon. Read quotations out of Monsieur Filon's article on J. Morley; was much struck by several things, especially the last saying, "Truth is quiet." It seemed to heal me. The French admire J. Morley immensely. This summer M. de Vogué raved about him to me—if you can imagine the praise of so stiff and grave a man being called raving. I can quite see how thoughtful Frenchmen must be struck by Morley; his austerity and healthiness must almost wound the majority of them, while exciting their highest admiration and respect. He looks at life from a height, quietly, objectively, and a little greyly. His philosophy steps in between him and political power. He lacks faith. There is a thin veil between his principles and his personality. One knows—without asking why—that he will never be Prime Minister. M. A. Filon says of Morley's *Compromise*, "It is a very frank book; a little blunt; not very conciliatory; and imperious as a summons." He says of his *Rousseau*, "It is in this book that we find those alternations between

disdain and indulgence, that shrinking disgust, and returning out of pity, which characterize him, and which his subject, alas ! so well justified."

*Monday, 7th December.*—Saw Denderah, the finest temple we have yet seen. The top of each column is caught up like a curtain, and coloured turquoise blue; they are covered with bas-reliefs of kings and prisoners, ships and serpents. I noticed a finer type of face—Nero on one wall and Cleopatra on another, and a lovely panther—with a dead figure lying on it—Greek in design.

*LUXOR, 7th December.*—We got to Luxor in the finest sundown I ever saw ; no trace of brown river, merely a sheet of molten, undulating gold, verging into copper, towards the banks. All the inhabitants turned out to see us arrive—dignified, graceful figures, in long chemises of brown or green, blue and white ; handsome superior men, for Luxor is a big town. They stood, or squatted, or leant against their donkeys, with a background of the massive granite blocks of the Temple of Luxor. The many columns were in long avenues, a colossal figure of a god or king between each, and a finely cut obelisk stood out violet in the dead sunlight.

Mr. Harris, my nice ex-railway director, took Papa and me across to the hotel to see if there were any letters. We walked through the garden and the old gentleman stopped, and, picking me a pink rose, said, " I know a genuine article when I see it—I am too old to flatter : young lady, you are charming." I found eighteen letters, three of which were quite incomprehensible, to me from Mary Drew ; " Risking mischief-making, I cannot resist this enclosure (I need hardly

say there was *no* enclosure); but if you can go and see him, you will soon be on the best of terms," etc. Who "he" is I have no notion whatever! I at once wrote to ask. The next was from E. C.: "I regret having sent you my letter. Why can I not trust you?—Yours in nothing but haste, E." Having never heard from E., I could not understand this and felt vexed at the stupidity of my friends, but proceeded to devour charming letters from Mr. Asquith, Ribblesdale, Oscar Wilde—dedicating a story to me, *The Star Child*, one from Mr. Rodd sending me the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and one from Mr. Algernon West, sending me Lord Rosebery's *Pitt*, which I read into the night and early morning.

LUXOR, 8th December.—We crossed the Nile to see the tombs of the kings, and lunched in "Tomb 18." Much as I respect Cook, and despise people who think it vulgar to go and see places of interest in company with strangers, I felt a faint shudder at the announcement of our lunching spot! Most of the tombs are thirty to forty feet underground, and the colours wonderfully preserved. Some of the ceilings most beautiful. I was immensely pleased with a yellow panther surrounded by stars, and a snake with three heads, four legs, one tail, and two wings.

After lunch we climbed up a wild, sandy, stony hill, to see a view of the desert and Nile; lonely, savage and strange. I was reminded of some text in the Old Testament about the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. After a long ride, we sailed back across the river to our steamer in the warm light of sundown.

Sitting next to Mr. Harris at dinner, I had a good talk. He was discussing French poetry, and I abused

the *Messieurs* and *Mesdames*, and general poorness and stiltedness of Corneille and Racine. He told me that Byron had called French poetry "monotony in wire"; and I delighted him by telling him of a gentleman who had never known Platonic affection till he married. Apropos of Dizzy, and his power of cut and thrust, he said that after some speech of Lord Salisbury's he had said, "The noble Lord's invective lacks finish." Mr. Harris is a subtle-minded, clever old man.

LUXOR, *Wednesday, 9th December*.—I read Rosebery's *Life of Pitt*, in bed, and watched the scarlet sun rising over the hill. My berth is close to the water, and the moon slants over the blankets, casting a light on my modern purchases of scarabs, mummies, and blue "uspabli" figures, neatly arranged on the uninhabited bed.

We rode from Luxor to see Karnak (date about 1600 B.C.)—perhaps the finest temple on the Nile. The type of face on the walls is magnificent, and all is in perfect preservation. It rather damps my enterprise being in a small dark room full of fellow-passengers holding tallow dips in front of their noses, listening to the monotonous voice of the dragoman telling lies about Rameses or Seti, with bats whirling round our heads.

After lunch, we were photographed in a vulgar group, ruins in front, and columns behind, and two handsome savages imported from the hills. My face comes out large and solid, and Mamma's looks like a heathen idol!

10th December.—Got up early, and saw the Temple of Medenet Habon—also two colossi, one of which

is supposed to sing. They sit, large and faceless, looking towards Mecca, the green corn, and silver thread of Nile joining the horizon below them. We hired a sort of boat and went on the river : our sails swelled in the wind as we dipped and sped along the Nile. I took my shoes off and sat on the edge, dangling my feet in the water and telling ghost stories over my shoulder to my fellow-passengers. I am looked upon as an acquisition here, and am listened to, and laughed at.

In the evening we were invited by the Italian Consul to go to a "fantasia," or native dance. We went into a crowded, stone-paved room a step off the street. A few lanterns hung from the walls, a piece of Persian carpet on the floor, and at the end of the room several Arab men and women squatted on the floor. Before we were seated, a hideous female, in a long striped dressing-gown, with coins on her forehead, and elastic-sided boots, began to chink copper castagnettes and shake her corsetless figure, wriggling and gliding slowly round the circle. A dismal little gong and squeak rose from the floor, repeating the same two bars of minor wailing for an hour without variation. Sometimes the woman stopped, shaking her breasts and stomach, and, in shrill and wrangling Arabic, addressed two other women. This was friendly and casual and meant nothing in particular. Later on, the other two joined the dance in a more exaggerated form. Papa was so shocked that he left the room. The bottle trick was clever : a thick-lipped, aggressive darkey rolled over and over like a large undeveloped fish, with a lighted candle in a bottle on her head. Her vast hips collected folds of bed-

gown round her, till her elastic-sided boots and white-stockinged legs up to her garters were exhibited.

*Friday, 11th December.*—We left early for Esneh where we saw a magnificent Roman Temple underground. I was accompanied by a student with books under his arm. I asked him what he was reading, and found he spoke English beautifully, and the book was rather a stiff work on mental and moral training. I thought him interesting. He was a Christian, of the name of Victor Gladius. I got a letter from him at Assouan, beautifully written, beginning: "Dear Miss—I am in high spirits to write to you. As soon as you left Esneh I was thinking about you. . . . Suppose I may have a good mind, a sound judgment, a vivid imagination, or a wide reach of thought of views, believe me I am not a genius, and can never become distinguished without severe application; hence all that I have must be the result of labour—hard, untiring labour," etc. He wants me to get him an appointment under "Hulner."\* I went to see his neat little room; it was rather touching—a lot of books, among others Wallis Budge's *Nile*.

ASSOUAN, *Saturday, 12th December.*—We got to Assouan late, and I rode on a camel for the first time through the bazaar. I was introduced on my return to some English officers—Lord Athlumney and Major Lewis. I was promised a mount by Athlumney and arranged to go to their parade next day. (Rather a relief to meet a gentleman.)

ASSOUAN, *13th December.*—The Soudanese soldiers are tall, large-mouthed, and of nigger type, and were dressed in tarbouches, loose, grey-blue cloth coats,

\* He meant Mr. Milner.



knickerbockers, high white "spats," like Highlanders, with red sashes round their waists. We breakfasted in the mess-room. We were the first European women that had crossed the barrack-yard for eight months, and I could see courtesy and enthusiasm in every movement of these nice Englishmen. I looked at the mignonette sprouting at intervals in the hot sand amid large-leafed weeds, and told the young gardener that the weeds would choke the mignonette.

*Lord Athlumney*—"Weeds! Why, that's my mustard and cress. It does grow rather large here."

*Major Lewis*—"Praise our marigolds, Miss Tennant; they have come up in no time, and aren't they jolly colours?"

We heard a voice shouting—"Muggins! Muggins! how about those eggs and bacon?"

*Lord Athlumney*—"This is the mess-room. Let me introduce you to Hunter." (I bowed to the voice.)

*Margot*—"I think I heard you ordering a British servant to get our breakfast."

*Hunter*—"Oh! Muggins isn't British; he's an Arab. Funny name, isn't it? I suppose it is short for something or other!"

We all sat down in a bare, stone-floored, wooden-roofed room, with the walls distempered a chilly grey. I admired a lamp—

*Major Lewis*—"Oh! that's Drago's; he's an awful swell! He'll show you his room, and you must play the piano. We have only got one."

*Macdonald*—"And you must pour boiling water in *that* to drive out the scorpions before you can make a sound on it."

*Lord Athlumney*—"I wish we'd thought of it, and we would have had it tuned."

*Hunter* (to Muggins)—"Hi!" (followed by an Arabic oath), "not cold turkey! grilled, you stupid; and look sharp. I'm afraid (turning to us) you are having a very poor meal. Would you rather drink Moselle cup or champagne? We can give you lots of that. I must say the tea is rather earthy."

*Lord Athlumney*—"Hunter is such a Sybarite! If he had been weeks in the desert with nothing but salt wells and a chance of a Dervish bullet to pull you together, he'd find the tea all right."

*Lewis*—"Come and see my room."

*Lord Athlumney*—"Mine is nearest; come and see mine. You dance awfully well, don't you, Miss Tennant? I'll show you a photograph of Letty Lind."

I delighted him by telling him she had given me lessons for two months. We adjourned to his room. Between photographs of ballet girls, soldiers, relations, courbashes, spears and swords were hung up, and a view of his Irish country place. He showed me everything, even to blood marks on an old bastinado. Our expression of horror delighted him, and Lewis added, "Oh! that is nothing; his servant is a murderer, and ought to be serving his time now—manslaughter they call it—and, if it hadn't been that his last master was a fiery-tempered chap he would not be here now."

*Margot*—"How?"

*Lewis*—"Oh! they came to arrest him, and S—— said 'What the hell' (or words to that effect) 'do you mean by arresting my servant?' And his

language was so awful that the native police retired."

We left them standing up against the white barrack wall, touching their tarbouches.

In the afternoon, I put a judicious safety-pin into my white skirt, and put on the smartest shoes and stockings I possessed, and skewered my straw hat. I was mounted by Lord Athlumney on a really beautiful Arab, about 15 hands, chestnut, with a turned-up nose, and the gamest eye I ever saw; a little devil, and as swift as a swallow. I faced the dancing air and galloping plain of the desert. We went as fast as we could, and I felt I was showing more ankle than the safety-pin had guaranteed! Athlumney, seeing my efforts to keep my petticoats neat, said, with frank simplicity, "Oh! never mind. If you knew what it was to see a well-turned leg after these Arab shanks, you would forgive us for seeing beyond your ankle." We rode home past the Beshareen camp, with a white moon rising behind us, and the scattered colours of a gorgeous sunset. It was dark when we reached Assouan, and the sky was spangled with stars.

ASSOUAN, *Monday, 14th December*.—Major Lewis, Lord Athlumney, and Mr. Hunter fetched Papa and myself for a ride, and, with the eyes of the entire Assouan population upon us, we started off at a gallop through the town, nearly colliding with camels and donkeys, or the groups of squatting women and smoking men. My horse turned into his stable, going a hundred miles an hour, and, had it not been for the sand, must have slipped up. I thought he would brain himself against the wall, but, after an

oath from Athlumney, I reassured my friends, and we reached the rough ground. Papa did not like the rocks, but they amused me. I have heard so much of Arab ponies over rough ground, and I do not think they are over-praised—active, sure, and smooth on hot, slippery rocks. I would trust them not to fall in places, where I certainly should be on my head.

We returned as the moon rose, and Major Lewis begged us to come and have tea in his room. As he had had to pick up my hat twice in the ride, I thought it was the least we could do. He was charming to us, and his bedroom a study. I felt translated into a Kipling story—the rough resource of his chairs and cupboards, the string bed in the open air, the neatly-kept boots, spurs and whips, hanging against a scarlet curtain on a bare wall. While Athlumney was showing Papa his Arab shields and spurs in the next room, Major Lewis was kissing my hands, and telling me I was the most wonderful person he had ever met—gay, kind and true, and a delight to be with. I told him, if he did not take care, I should believe that I had deceived him about myself, and that it was lucky I was leaving at daybreak.

The officers dined with us that night, and we had a regular orgie and “fantasia.” I danced with my castagnettes and I think I danced better than I ever did in my life, the audience acted like a stimulant on me. The iron supports to the ship ceiling broke a little of the monotony of the deck, and scarlet frock and black lace petticoat did good service. I heard Mr. Hunter say it was the most lovely thing he had ever seen. A crowd of Arab sailors watched me from a distance, Cook’s tourists sat against the deck railing,

and the five officers in uniform made a ring round me. We finished with Sir Roger de Coverley, and accompanied them to the shore to see them off. They looked like Bedouins as they galloped away, their black silhouettes clear against the white Assouan houses.

15th December.—We got to Luxor at tea-time, and received a batch of letters. Lord Lytton's successor not named officially. Prince Eddy's engagement to Princess May announced. I read Arthur Balfour's Glasgow address. The *motif* not distinct, and, though clever, left you chilly. To say "knowledge is not power" to students at a university, is discouraging in the first place, and a platitude in the second; it is one of the things one knows, but does not tell. I read an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on Madame Ackermann, a rebellious atheist, who constantly rails against the God she refuses to believe in. There was a nice quotation from Madame de la Fayette:—

"La religion n'a pas à toutes les questions une réponse aussi précise que celle de l'immortalité en face de la mort; mais il n'y a pas de douleur qu'elle laisse sans la soulager. C'est la différence entre une plaie qui est pansée et une plaie qui ne l'est pas."

After dinner we rode to Karnak. I had the fleetest donkey, Minnehaha (laughing water), and we flew, till the crupper broke, and my saddle collided with its ears. While the strap was being mended, my friends caught me up, and remonstrated on the danger of galloping in the dark, where the shadows look like fences and cart ruts are as black as graves.

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I left my party, and sitting under the piercing black shadow of one of the columns, looked at the obelisk. It stood aloof and penetrating, with a single star above it, and was so beautiful, that it filled my soul with reverence.

## CHAPTER V

### HOMeward FROM LUXOR TO MARSEILLES

*Farewell to Luxor—John Scott—Abydos—Princess Nazli—Wilfrid Blunt—The Barings—The Grenfells—The Khedive's funeral, January, 1892—Nubar Pasha—Lady Charles Beresford—Back at Marseilles.*

16th December, 1891.—We left Luxor after many affectionate adieux to our friends. We sailed all day. I had a talk to a new and charming passenger, Mr. John Scott, the Chief Justice out here—a friend of Lord Dufferin—a very gentle, sympathetic, cultivated man, who lent Papa his *Times*, and me books of all kinds, and reviews. I read “Ribblesdale's Journey with Parnell” in *The Nineteenth Century*—very well done; also M. Filon on John Morley, and Traill's *Life of Salisbury*. I had a long talk with Mr. Scott about Egypt and Gladstone's foolish speech at Newcastle, and felt more convinced than ever of the impossibility of evacuation. The result would be a fearful state of things here; ultimate annexation.

ABYDOS, 17th December.—We all three got up early and rode our donkeys for twelve miles. It was splendidly plucky of Mamma. We lunched at

Abydos, which is a grand temple ; beautifully-preserved bas-reliefs, and the history of Egypt since heaven knows when, clearly cut in acres of wall. We rode home through beanfields, which smelt like England ; Mamma, Bates\*, and I all together, ambling along in the clear soft air, quite easy and happy. I got a telegram from Lord Athlumney—"To-day I find the world is hollow, and my doll is stuffed with sawdust ; horse pining away ; am seeking consolation in the desert.—A."

ASSIOUT, 18th December.—We got to Assiout in the afternoon and, accompanied by Mr. Scott, I went on shore. He received fifteen native judges, and gave them coffee. He ordered a carriage and pair to drive Mamma to the foot of the hill to see the finest view in Egypt. Papa and I rode donkeys, and had a nice *tête à tête* talk ; he is well, and happy, exchanging reminiscences with Mr. Harris on old Bath days and early actors—Helen Faucit, Macready, and Malibran. He has a wonderful memory, and knows Byron, the Ingoldsby Legends, Shakespeare, Milton, and Tommy Moore, by the yard. He told me that one day in Bath—when he was about eighteen—while looking through a tobacconist's window, he saw a very pretty girl behind the counter, upon which he walked into the shop, and straight up to her, kissed her, saying as an excuse to her: "It is all your fault for being so pretty !"

We climbed slowly up the hill, and sitting down, looked over the valley of the Nile. The corn was greener than emerald, and the colour of the earth left by the overflow was a warm red chocolate.

\* Miss Bates, my mother's maid.



Below us lay the town, built of mud bricks, but relieved by five or six beautiful minarets. The dyke along which we rode wound between us and the town, and was a busy thoroughfare of camels and donkeys. The groups of travelling Arabs and Bedouins, with loads of stone and corn, and sugar-cane on their donkeys, made a harmony of faded colours, like a Persian rug ; men were standing in the water, up to their middles, washing clothes or sheep, and one was singing, in a loud, soothing monotony, a song like Bizet's "A l'hautesse Arabe." The range of the view from Assiout Hill gives one of the most complete ideas of Egypt, I think.

19th December.—Sir Henry Roscoe and Mr. Darwin came to see us from the other ship, *Rameses the Great*. We discussed the evacuation of Egypt, and were all of one mind. I need hardly say that we got warmer over the discussion than if we had differed. I wrote this diary, and read *Collette*, and walked up and down with Mr. Scott, who remembered Posie and Charty as little girls going to Palermo in 1869. I asked Mamma what had decided her to send them to Palermo. She replied that she and Papa always looked upon the map to see how far south a place was.

After dinner, Mamma, Mr. Scott and I talked of life seriously. I began by saying that I could not have married a country curate ; that it would have stifled me. Mr. Scott said very simply, "One career is much the same as another, if you forget yourself in your work ; in any case, you do but scratch the surface." This depressed me, as I felt its truth, and I tried to defend myself ; but I knew all the time that he was right. We watched a large

moon rise while we continued our talk which brought an ache into my heart, though my friend was as hopeful as Wordsworth in all he said. He has gone through much, and life has assumed its right proportions with him. I found Mamma reading *Lead Kindly Light*, when I went in to say good-night to her.

CAIRO, 29th December.—Mamma and I were taken by Lady Baring to see the Vice Reine, as the Khedive's wife is called. She was on her dahabieh—a stoutish, fair-complexioned lady, with a Parisian dress of stone-coloured cloth and skunk fur. She spoke French, and we all sat in a circle round her. An occasional remark was made on the obvious—the weather, the Nile, the ship, or the teacups. We all spoke French. I sat next to Lady Alice Portal, who looked charming in a large black hat. We drank coffee out of jewelled teacups.

31st December.—Papa, Mamma, Godfrey Webb, Miss Fane and I visited Wilfrid Blunt, an enthusiastic individualist and good poet, with an elaborate plan of living like a Bedouin, under the impression that people in the London world are saying, “Strange man that! buried in his wild desert life, writing and reading, etc.” I doubt if they are! But he is one of the most beautiful men I have ever met. We went in a dusty train to a little station, and were met by the great man, beautifully dressed, on a splendid white donkey. A lot of camels waited to take us to his house.

There was a strong contrast in Papa's neat, dapper person, dressed in Lovat mixture, with a green Tyrolese hat, and smart “spats”—energy and success in every movement—following this tall, artistic dreamer through a labyrinth of unroofed Arab

rooms into an orange garden, and presented there to a *farouche* and good-looking daughter "Judith," also in Bedouin garments, with an ivory dagger stuck through a wide silk sash, and a long brown cloak paralysing to all movement, but graceful and pretty. The girl showed me her bedroom—a squalid mixture of rags and shields. A gun hung upon the wall. I asked its purpose, and she said it was to protect her from the Dervishes. I pointed out the civilized distance that separated her from such a probability, and she said, "Any animal, hyena, etc., might come at night." I replied, "Would not an umbrella be handier? Or can you shoot?" She blushed, and I felt I had said the wrong thing. Lady Anne was very nice to us, and gave us tea; and we then all rode off to the ostrich-farm. This was smelly, tiresome, and full of fleas.

We dined at the club, guests of Major Lloyd, Captain Beauchamp and Captain Martyr. I went to the midnight service with Mamma and Godfrey, and Papa went to the Walkers' party. I stayed alone for the Holy Communion, a beautiful service, which I shall never forget. The clergyman preached on the future. I gathered from his sermon that we should not find the continual new openings and opportunities which the word "future" implies to hopeful young people, but a chaos of consequences closely and inevitably woven with the past. I walked home with Alfred Milner.

CAIRO, 3rd January, 1892.—We have been here a fortnight to-day, and my impressions of Cairo society are quickly told. Lady Baring seems to me to have the most dignity—perhaps from nature, perhaps from

the importance of her position. She is aloof, and keeps clear of social factions and petty provincial disputes. Sir Evelyn has natural authority, and impresses all with respect. He is full of every English virtue, with an English sense of humour, and a great appreciation of literature of all kinds. Without being what I should call an intellectual or subtle man, he is a man of intellect, and has excellent commonsense. His determination might amount to obstinacy, and he has a directness of purpose bewildering to all the Orientals. He is youthful and simple in his domestic relations, loving little jokes, and telling good stories. Under a short-sighted, rather silent exterior, he really observes everything, and is *très convaincu*. Without having the fancy to be conceited, he knows the value of his own qualities. I like him much, and had some interesting talk with him.

Lady Grenfell is a very important and active member of society—a fashionable figure, with a small waist and a great deal of social energy. She and Sir Francis, or “The Sirdar,” as he is called, are delightful together, most happy and understanding. He is a perfect dear—big, comfortable, authoritative, enjoying everything, arranging everything; fond of work, fond of military effect, and full of heart and nature. I often ran in before dinner to have a talk with him.

Mr. Milner is both practically and intellectually the first of our English officials; he is loved and trusted, and has done more to make our occupation popular than anyone. I never met Scott Moncrieff; but Garstin, his successor, is a dear man, sensible, unaffected, and intelligent. Mr. Money is the oldest English resident in Cairo. The pretty woman of the

place is the General's wife, Mrs. W——, a lovely elf-like little face, with fresh colouring, good hair, eyes and eyebrows, and coral pink run into a white skin—what Baron Malorti would call a “ keepsake ” face. General W—— is handsome and looks about thirty-five. Colonel Kitchener is a man of energy and ambition, a little complacent over his defects, he has not got an interesting mind.

I have met while abroad only two natives of real intelligence and interest. One is Princess Nazli, the ex-Khedive's first cousin, a woman of European emancipation, receiving both men and women unveiled in her own house, although outside her home she wears the yashmak. A woman of past forty, powdered and painted under the eyes, with the remains of beauty ; a face full of experience and intelligence ; a great talker, frightfully indiscreet, but graphic, and well taught in English. The other, an Armenian, Nubar Pasha, ex-Prime Minister, a man of sixty-eight, and extremely clever, with a subtle intellect, and unscrupulous political morality.

7th January.—I went to Princess Nazli's opera-box. She told me much of the education of women and her short married life. She has *de beaux restes*, but is heavily painted. We spoke of her cousin, the Khedive. She said he was stupid and kind ; and when I added, “ He is good, I have heard,” she said, “ He has the virtue of his nature, and no more.” She was brilliantly indiscreet, and told appalling stories of Oriental vice and ignorance. The Arab pashas are brutal, not to say bestial. She said she would rather die than be under the French, and raved about the greatness of

England, and all we had done for Egypt. She has many friends—the Dufferins, Layards, and other English correspondents. She put her cloak and yashmak on me, and begged me to be photographed in them. I was assisted by a hideous old slave, whom the princess told me had been one of her husband's mistresses. She was brought up with her and thirty other slaves. One day, in a rage, she told me, she sold all these early companions of her youth as a public example, and gave the money to the Turkish army, which was in rags. Now, she tells me, she has to pension them off, and they live with her or about the house like vagrants.

*8th January.*—I rode to an early review on a smart-actioned chestnut of Captain Beauchamps. I felt happy in the glorious sunlight, racing and bounding along the short, sandy grass of the race-course, with the dust blowing, and the bands playing with a crude military rhythm accompanied by the rat-a-tat of little drums, all the staff galloping and curvetting round the dignity of Sir Francis Grenfell, who looked magnificent on his grey Arab.

After lunch, we went in a steamship to see the Barrage, with Alfred Milner and a lot of other people. It was a marvellous sight—perfect mechanism, and beautifully kept. Originally French, but practically adapted by us, the three great branches of the Nile are entirely workable through the Barrage. Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff has done wonders for the irrigation of Egypt.

On our return, we heard that the Khedive had died. The native doctors were almost entirely to blame, as they treated him for diseases he had not



TEWFIK PASHA, KHEDEIVE OF EGYPT IN 1891





got. National prejudice kept all English doctors away from him. Sir Evelyn Baring told me that there were a certain number of people in Cairo who thought he had poisoned the Khedive. The sudden blow of the Khedive's death affected everyone very much, and we all wore black that night.

*9th January.*—We went to the Khedive's funeral, a never-to-be-forgotten sight. Abdin Square, full of soldiers and a brilliant, coloured crowd kept in order by mounted police. Major Fenwick and Colonel Kitchener in cocked hats, using their batons with much violence. Godfrey Webb, Papa, Mamma, and I sat on the wall of the barracks, overlooking the great square. I frightened my friends by hanging my feet over, as the twist the seat gave to my ribs, when sitting the correct way, was more than I could stand. The sun beat fiercely on our white wall. We were so much above the crowd, that the effect was more like a Turkey carpet, finely woven of beautiful colours, than an excited, condensed, swaying mass of people. Shrieks and odd sounds rent the air, and an occasional Arab in orange or turquoise would break the lines of the police and rush across the open spaces like a Derby dog, hotly pursued by a mounted and perspiring officer. Carriage after carriage of white plumes and black bonnets drove into the square—ambassadors, ministers, and officials of all kinds, with grave faces. Everyone seemed to be waiting for someone or something. Out of the far corner of the square, before the front door of the Palace, where all the principal people stood, emerged a group of men carrying a coffin upon

their heads. It was like a large primitive toy steam-engine. A little funnel with the Khedive's tarbouche placed on the top, and all his medals hung round it. Eight of Cook's steamboat men, in sailor jerseys, and with naked legs and turbans, walked in front, with vast wreaths of violets and laurels, and immediately following were fifty hired women in black, with long black veils, all wailing in loud, long shrieks, and throwing dust from the road into the air. They tore their black draperies, flinging gaunt arms above their heads, and waving bits of fusty black in the wind. They were hirelings, and their shrieks and wails are a custom without soul, but bought grief is barbaric and impressive. After these came the procession of important people, headed by Sir Evelyn Baring and the French officials, etc.

I need hardly say that the crowd broke loose, and the confusion in the square following on the procession was terrific—the screams, scuffles and beatings and the kaleidoscopic colours—all riveted us—and appeared like a realistic picture of the Crucifixion, without the peace of the Cross. The silent guard of the sunburnt citadel, mosques and minarets were paying a greater tribute to death than the uniformed procession or yelling crowd.

*12th January.* We met Nubar Pasha, the ex-Prime Minister, a remarkable man, with a quick, subtle, Armenian mind. At first, the conversation hung. Nubar talked of Palmerston. Papa spoilt this by saying in a tone of surprised remonstrance, "I knew him," which did not advance us. I began to abuse the Egyptians in a half-laughing, half-serious way; but he stuck up for them in a light, quick,

effective manner. He said he was as much an Egyptian as Goschen was an Englishman. I said that, from what I had seen of Egyptians, I would rather be an Armenian, at which he bowed. I asked why he should wish to claim their nationality, and went on challenging him, till I made him laugh by saying, "You know that if there were ten Egyptians as clever as you, we should not be occupying Egypt." He smiled, and said my intelligence renewed his youth (he is sixty-eight), and asked why he had not met me before. He abused Sir Evelyn Baring, with whom I hear he had had a hot quarrel. He praised Milner highly. His hatred of the French amused me, but I expect he hates us just as much. I felt he was a wily, wicked old man, but his manners are imperial, and he has a fine head.

*Wednesday, 13th January.*—We were given a dinner at the club. I had a delightful talk with Tom Baring on early English literature; discussed the *Sentimental Journey*, *Richard II*, style in prose, and novelists in general. We played "Consequences" and "Telegrams." After dinner Godfrey and I did the best "telegrams," and gave the subjects:—  
1. Trying to pass on to another lady a drunken maid. 2. An American husband warning his wife against Cairo society. I don't fancy the Turf Club in Cairo has often had a lot of people with pencils in their hands sitting round the dinner-table.

*14th January.*—I lunched with Sir Evelyn, and he drove me back. We heard of Prince Eddy's death. This cast a tremendous gloom over everyone. I wrote to the Prince of Wales, and feel deep sympathy for them both.

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*15th January.*—A meeting at the Continental Hotel to sign a telegram of sympathy to the Queen. Sir Evelyn made a short and genuine speech. Mr. Money spoke for everyone, with a true ring of eloquence and condolence, alluding to Queen Victoria's letter to wives, mothers and sweethearts, at the time of the Crimean war.

*Saturday, 16th January.*—My last day in Cairo. I got up early, and went for a long walk with A. Milner, and had a memorable talk. I feel enriched by my affection for one great and true man. I found Papa packing up on my return, fussy and busy (he left out his night-gown in the end!), but very good and uncomplaining, considering his servant, our courier, was unable to do him the smallest service, being laid up with low fever.

Farewell visits were paid us by people, and presents of all kinds given. Major Lloyd begged me to take a little old silver matchbox, which had been all through the wars with him, also a cigarette case. He is a gentle soldier of the best British type. Captain Beauchamp drove us to see the arrival of the young Khedive. Sir Evelyn had a military escort, which caused a sensation. I thought it clever of him to assert his authority at a critical moment. There was a small Arab boy in a yellow chemise climbing up a date-palm in the private gardens of the barracks below who fascinated me; he looked like a lovely little parrot in the palm-tree.

We had time on our return to change into travelling gowns and catch the evening train to Alexandria. Every friend came to see me off at the station with bon-bons, flowers, fruit, and presents. We steamed

slowly out of sight of our waving friends. Arrived at Alexandria ; doubtful meal ; iron pillow ; Lady Charles Beresford reading a French novel on her bed at 9.30 p.m. ; her child dangerously ill with pneumonia in the next passage.

19th *January*.—Started on the *Gironde*, the foulest boat that was ever called seaworthy—small, old, dirty, and rolling. Vile food at surprising hours—coffee at 7.30 ; dinner with five courses, at 10.30 a.m. ; cold ham and beef at 2 ; tea at 7 ; and a heavy meal at 9—all poisonous.

20th *January*.—My third day on the *Gironde*. I have got up for the first time, chiefly to please Papa and Godfrey, and get what is called “ the splendid fresh air,” but what, on a ship like this, means a searching smell of rotten tomatoes and a driving gale of little smuts, which go into one’s eyes whichever way one sits, walks, or turns. I love Dr. Johnson more than ever, because he shared my loathing for the sea, and said that “ no man with the wits to get into gaol need be a sailor.” Never a moment’s quiet ; and this throb, throb, eternally felt, first in one’s temple, then in one’s stomach, echoing through the marrow of one’s spine ; stale food, condensed sweetened Swiss milk, and no possibility of fresh water or fresh anything ; steam, smells, and cooking following the ship unceasingly. Papa and Godfrey are splendid sailors, good-humoured and happy, and smoke all day. Mamma and I have nice talks ; she is a sweet companion. She came down to talk to me to-night after dinner.

Mamma—“ Godfrey asked me if I played backgammon. I told him I had not played for forty years.”

*M.*—"Is it a nice game, Mamma?"

*Mamma*—"My dear, I would as soon run and kick a ball along the floor." (Laughter.)

*M.*—"Did you eat any dinner?"

*Mamma*—"No, it was poor stuff. Your father said it was good, and I did not contradict him."

*M.*—"You're so sensible; but you know, when I hear nonsense talked, it makes me physically ill not to contradict. Listening to Papa at times, when he quotes the last fool, and then adds, 'I am not saying one thing or another, but just telling you the opinion he gave me,' is more than human nature can bear."

*Mamma*—"I too have been very impatient with him. He talks without going into the thing, and flies off about nothing at all."

*M.*—"You are very wise with him; the older I get, the more I see it. Why didn't you influence him to think less of material things? His first questions about a woman are nearly invariably, '*Est-elle riche?*' (I don't know whether he thinks French modifies his curiosity); and the second, 'Have they any children?'"

(Later on). *M.*—"I'm so glad you taught us, by your remarks and example, the unimportance of one's likes and dislikes, heat and cold, and whether people are vulgar or not."

*Mamma*—"It is cruel to make children precious, or too concerned with themselves. They have little tolerance or unselfishness, and become odious to themselves and to other people."

*M.*—"I'm glad we were allowed to see and be with whoever we liked. It gives one courage, and I'm sure it makes one capable. Look at Charlotte."

*Mamma*—"Her courage is marvellous in everything. I believe, if she had to go to New York to-morrow morning, she would pack up, and be quite ready to start."

*M.*—"I should *not* be so good for a journey, I fear!"

*Mamma*—"You see, you are a wretched sailor. I think you have more social courage than anyone I ever saw in my life."

I said good-bye to *Mamma* and *Papa* at Marseilles station on the night of the 23rd, and I felt my heart tighten as I kissed them both. I had loved my time abroad with them, and, whatever I may have said about trifling irritations, or any seeming irreverence of criticism, it does not touch or diminish my true appreciation, gratitude, and unchanging love for them both.





IMPRESSIONS  
OF AMERICA, 1922



# IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA, 1922

## CHAPTER I

### TO AMERICA IN THE *CARMANIA*

*Travel and Travellers' Stories—Newspapers in London and in New York, a comparison—American women and American men.*

I motored to Southampton on Saturday, the 21st of January, this year (1922), and after saying good-bye to my husband and my son, retired to my berth on the *Carmania*. I am a bad traveller, and had been laid up with a sort of influenza till the day before I left London.

Kindly Press people tempted me to confide in them on the ship. They asked me if I would be back in time for Princess Mary's wedding, where I was going to when I arrived in America, and if I looked forward to my trip. I sometimes wonder what questions I would put if I were obliged to interview a traveller. I would ask with reluctance where they were going, but never what they had seen, because I know I could not listen to their answers. Everyone knows what you are likely to see if you go for any length of time to London, Rome, Athens or the United States ; and is there a person living whose impressions you would care to hear either upon the Colosseum, Niagara Falls

or any other of the great works of Art or of Nature ? On such subjects the remarks of the cleverest and stupidest are equally inadequate and the superb vocabulary of a Ruskin will probably not be more illuminating than what the schoolboy writes in the visitors' book at Niagara, " Uncle and all very much pleased."

I am inclined to think it is a mild form of vanity that makes a certain type of rich person travel every year. I have heard these say that for all the interest we who are left behind take in what they have seen and heard, they might as well have remained at Brighton. Nevertheless, the world is full of tourists ; and there are a number of people who like to pick up pieces of unimportant information without effort. The foolish majority of these read the *Daily Mail* ; the political, *The Manchester Guardian* ; the Liberals, *The Westminster Gazette* ; the intellectual, *The New Statesman* ; and to pass the time on Sundays there are always the long columns of *The Observer* ; or, for the credulous, the *Secret History of the Week*.

In America, it is rather different. On the front page of one of the most important papers, you read : " Kardos has hopes of Father's aid," " Men faint in public and lose 153,000," " Death note writer caught in Capital," " Losses of Women duped by Lindsay," " Iceland Cabinet falls," " Tokio diet in uproar over snake on floor," " Saddle horse from Firestone Harding's favourite mount," and short notices on Ireland, Paris and London ; you are encouraged to turn to page 6, column 5, or column 8, page 5, and finish with " Dazzling display of Princess Mary's *lingerie*."

It is difficult to say why most travellers are uninteresting. I do not think it is because they have been to wonderful places, but because the average man has not the power to assimilate or interpret what he has seen ; he enlarges on his own sensations with such a lack of humour and proportion, that you feel as if he were not only rebuffing you, but claiming part of the credit of the master works himself. When told at a party that you ought to meet Mr. So-and-so, as he has just come back from the Far East, South-West, or North Pole, you cling to the nearest door-post, and make your escape while the hero is being traced in the crowd. I like what I have thought out for myself better than what I discover ; and conclusions arrived at after careful reflection are more enlarging than what is pointed out to you by inquisitive spectators.

I am not a natural tourist, and Napoleon's shaving soap will never interest me as much as the smallest light upon his mind or character. There is a difference between curiosity and interest, and I regret to say I am not curious.

I have come to the United States for the first time, not in a missionary spirit or to study anything or anybody, but to see my daughter and to enjoy myself.

In a rash moment, however, I promised to write my Impressions of America, and this may give rise to false hopes.

Lord Acton wrote in a letter to Mrs. Drew, " One touch of ill-nature makes the whole world kin," and I must make an effort not to disappoint my thoughtful critics. I have been accused of failing to appreciate the society of brilliant American women, whether in

Italy, Paris or London ; but it could be added with truth that brilliance, while stimulating most people, has always exhausted me. I prefer the clumsiest thought to the most finished phrase, and am so slow that the mildest complication may make me miss the point. "General and prolonged laughter" is a faculty I have never been able to acquire, and sudden explosions over anything I have said usually convince me that I had better have held my tongue.

To an outsider who has only known European Americans, the most noticeable thing about American women is their freedom from native soil. They are equally well-equipped whether their nationality is transferred from Russia to Rome, Vienna, Roumania or Paris. No blank cheque could be more adequately filled in, and I never cease wondering what can be the secret of their perfect social mechanism.

Beautiful to look at and elegantly dressed, with an open mind upon whatever topic is discussed, adaptable, available, rich and good-humoured, the American woman as I know her is the last word in worldliness and fashion. In my own country she is not only a popular, but a privileged person, and having started by being what is called "natural," she becomes more and more so every day.

The husbands of these ladies, when not of needy foreign aristocracy, are usually divorced, discharged, or disposed of in some way or other ; and, even if they are of the same nationality, are quite unlike the American man as I have known him.

He is seldom fashionable and never leisured ; he has a passion for learning all that there is to be known, and holds vigorous views upon most things. If a

little copious in narrative, he is never mechanical, but an absolutely genuine article ; spontaneous, friendly, hospitable and keen. He appears to treat his women folk with the patience and indulgence you extend to spoilt children, never attempting to discuss matters either literary or political with them, and is agreeably surprised if you show an interest in Wall Street or the White House.

I am jotting down these preliminary impressions, any one of which may—and probably will—have to be revised during the course of my travels.

## CHAPTER II

### NEW YORK

*My First lecture—The Gallery lady—American dancing.*

After an abominable voyage during which the ship rolled and rocked, groaned and shuddered, and the sea did precisely what it liked with us, we arrived a day and a half late, and, surrounded by Pressmen, I feather-stitched on to American soil.

If the reporters are a little lacking in awe, they make up for it by the intelligent interest they take in everything connected with one ; and, after being asked what I thought of “ flappers ” and what Mr. Lloyd George thought of me, I was allowed to go to the Ambassador Hotel. I could not have been greeted with more courtesy had I arrived at Windsor Castle, nor have I ever stayed in a better hotel.

My son-in-law Prince Bibesco, my daughter Elizabeth, and my cousin, Miss Tennant (whose brother is Sir Auckland Geddes’s private secretary), showed me the airy bedrooms and beautiful bathrooms which the Manager of the hotel had chosen for us. I sat down completely exhausted, when suddenly the door opened and my sitting-room was flooded



with male and female reporters. Having been seasick and without solid food for a week, the carpet and ceiling were still nodding at me, and I regret to confess that I said nothing very striking ; but they were welcoming and friendly ; and after a somewhat dislocated conversation I staggered off to bed.

I was introduced the next day by my cicerone, Mr. Lee Keedick, to the New Amsterdam Theatre, where scouts were placed in distant galleries to try my voice. I had no difficulty in making myself heard, but I felt terribly ill and more than inadequate as I made my first appearance at 3.30 in the well-filled theatre. Dr. Murray Butler introduced me in a courteous speech, and explained that after such an unusually rough crossing I would be obliged to sit down throughout the performance, which I much regretted.

I opened with a spirited account of an Irish horse dealer, which, I could see at a glance, interested nobody. Whether I was speaking Irish or English, it might have been Walloon for all the audience cared. My heart faded, my voice sank, and I knew that many could not hear ; some were not listening, and my friends were watching me with apprehension, charity and cheers. More dead than alive, I was relieved when an enterprising lady shouted from the gallery—

“ You’ve got my money for nothing—good-bye, I’ve had enough of you ! ”

This informal greeting stirred the kindness of my listeners to a protest, and as soon as I could I changed to other subjects. With the fall of the curtain many old friends came on to the stage, and, presenting me

with roses, assured me that I had won the hearts of my audience, after which I left the theatre.

Driving home, I opened the taxi windows and was struck with the architectural beauties of the streets. With the exception of Munich, I have never seen a modern town comparable to New York. The colour of the stone and lightness of the air would put vitality into a corpse ; and, in spite of a haunting recollection that the lady in the gallery had had enough of me, I returned to the Ambassador happy though exhausted.

My daughter took me in the evening to a wonderful party given by Miss Mabel Gerry. We wore our best clothes, but our taxi driver did not seem satisfied, and before turning into the magnificent courtyard, he stopped, opened the door, and enquired rather sceptically if this was where we were expected. Concealing our mortification, we urged him to drive on.

There was something for every taste at Miss Gerry's beautiful house. I started by sitting next to my dear old friend, Mr. Harry White, and a brilliant stranger, Mr. Thomas Ridgeway ; went on to play bridge, listened to a fluent pianist, and finished by dancing unknown steps to a wonderful band.

I am enunciating a platitude when I say the Americans are the finest dancers in the world.

## CHAPTER III

### BOSTON AND WORCESTER

*Railway Travelling in America—My stage-fright in Boston—Boston Public Library—The Sargent frescoes.*

On the second of February, next morning, my friend and secretary, Mr. Horton, myself and maid arrived in Boston City after a comfortable journey in a private compartment given to us by the courtesy of our guard. I do not wish to say anything disagreeable, but except for the beauty of the railway stations, the travelling arrangements in America are far inferior to ours. Sitting erect on revolving chairs in public is a trial not lessened by an atmosphere in which you could force pineapples.

We were greeted upon our arrival by reporters and cameras. It distresses me to stand blinking at the sun; as, not being a beauty, I know that my nose will always be more of a limb than a feature, and trying to look pleasant results in my teeth coming out like tombstones in the morning papers.

Left to ourselves, we went to examine the Symphony Hall, where I was to speak that night. Arriving on the stage, I stood appalled. Feeling like a midge upon a Dreadnought, I looked at the largest

hall I have ever seen, except the one in London, erected to the sacred memory of good Prince Albert.

“ This is a practical joke of the worst kind ! ” I exclaimed to the gentleman in attendance, “ and not for a million dollars would I insult the Boston people by making myself ridiculous here to-night. I have not been in prison, or divorced ; nor have I been to the North or South Pole, or climbed mountains and Matterhorns ; I have nothing wonderful to tell about, and instead of one woman shouting, ‘ Give me back my money—I’ve had enough of you,’ the whole audience will rise to their feet. This is not a hall, it’s a railway tunnel ! I cannot see the end of it : it’s made for engines or aeroplanes,” and I trembled with rage and apprehension.

“ It’s a concert hall, Madam, built for oratorios,” they replied, pointing to a vast organ decorating the wall behind me.

“ No doubt, drums, trumpets, or opera singers could make themselves heard, but a shrimp of a female standing alone here would make the gods laugh, and nothing will induce me to speak ! ”

“ But, dear Madam, all Boston is coming to hear you.”

Mr. Horton put his arm through mine, saying soothingly, “ You are tired ; let us go back to the hotel.”

Visibly distressed, the gentlemen of the hall assured me that men of meagre voice had lectured many times, and been perfectly heard ; and as I walked away I saw through the corner of my eyes that my angelic secretary was nodding to assure them that I would keep my contract.

In the taxi I burst into tears, asking what I had done to be so punished ; I said that the front rows would be deafened, the centre bewildered, and the balconies indignant. Mr. Horton assured me that I had a beautiful voice, an interesting personality and a plucky nature, etc., and that I must certainly go through with it as every seat had been sold.

I dressed with streaming eyes and scarlet nose, and in snow and silence we drove to the Symphony Hall. The platform and auditorium were crowded, and, blue with fear, I walked on to the front of the stage. My chairman, Mr. Arthur Hill (Corporation Counsel of the City of Boston), in introducing me spoke with the greatest ease, and I observed that every word he said was heard ; but it was obvious from the perfection of his speech that he had addressed a thousand audiences before, and this was only my second public appearance.

I stood up with my knees knocking together as I looked at the sea of expectant faces below me.

Heaven forbid that I should repeat what I said, but for one hour and twenty minutes I did the best I could ; beginning with my pleasure at being in America, I continued with stories of my native land, and ended with an account of Windsor Castle and the Disarmament Conference.

No President or Prime Minister could have had a more intelligent, friendly, courteous and responsive audience than the people of Boston. Aching from my ankles to my temples, I bowed to their repeated cheers, as, humble and happy, I retired from the stage.

Enthusiastic hearers pressed into the green-room, where I had sunk into a chair as immovable as the mangle. Mr. Horton, who had sat among the statues on the sky line, assured me he had heard every syllable. Eager reporters began to ask what I thought of Boston, but, dumb and exhausted, I bundled into my cloak. Crowds of men and women were waiting in the street, and as I motored away I gathered I had been a success.

The next day Lieutenant-Governor Mr. Alvin Fuller and his wife—who were among those who had congratulated me in the green-room the night before—gave us lunch and took us in their motor to the two great Boston sights : the Public Library and the Fine Arts Museum.

The Library is a magnificent building, founded in 1852, containing over two million volumes, half of which are lent out for daily use at home. The architects of the building were McKim, Mead, and White of New York, but most of the design was the work of Charles Follen McKim. The mural decorations are painted by Puvis de Chavannes, Edwin Austin Abbey, and John Singer Sargent. As my time was limited, I concentrated on the works of my friend Mr. Sargent.

It would be as impossible as it would be pretentious to attempt to describe the beauty of the Sargent Hall. It represents thirty years of thought and labour, and has a majesty of design, glory of drawing, and originality of conception unequalled by anything in Europe.

We went on from the Library to the Museum, where the decorations of the dome of the rotunda,

to say nothing of the exterior of the buildings, are magnificent. Here Mr. John Sargent has surpassed himself.

I have heard critics, for want of something better to say, express the opinion that he is a finer painter than artist. If they have any doubt upon the subject, let them go to Boston, and, if teachable, they will learn there that Sargent is not only a rare artist, but a poet and an architect.

Before leaving Boston City, I received a call from Mrs. Bancroft, an old lady of eighty, with whom I made friends. She was extremely clever, and when she said I had both grace and genius I thought her an excellent judge! She told me I looked tired, and when we said good-bye, she gave me a bunch of wonderful flowers.

We motored from Boston to Worcester in the Fullers' car, and dined with Mr. and Mrs. Charles M. Thayer, and, after an excellent dinner in good company, I delivered a lecture in the private house of Mr. and Mrs. Washburn, at which there were no reporters. Having implored my fellow guests at dinner to interrupt me in the drawing-room—as I had never addressed this kind of party before—we opened a sort of debate which I thoroughly enjoyed. I doubt if any English audience, unless of old friends, would have asked such clever and amusing questions, and I knew as I answered back, by the feeling of life and laughter, that it had been a success, and went to bed without remembering the New York lady who had had enough of me.

## CHAPTER IV

PHILADELPHIA, NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN

*Dr. Parkes's Sermon—The Philadelphian audience—Mrs. Vanderbilt's ball—Mr. Balfour—Three more Lectures.*

On Sunday, the fifteenth of February, Mr. and Mrs. Harry White took me to St. Bartholomew's, a modern church of great beauty. Dr. Parkes, a man of authority and eloquence, preached from the fourth chapter of Galatians, verse six :

“ And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.”

I did not need to be a Scotswoman to listen to the sermon that he preached. He said that we were fellow students graduating for a great University, joined in the Sonship of Christ, and that we should cultivate a spiritual fellowship with man, since the highest personality could never develop by itself.

I went back to the hotel profoundly impressed by what I had heard, and not in the humour to be interviewed by a Philadelphian reporter who was waiting to see me ; but I found Mr. V. Hostetter both understanding and intelligent.

The next day I went to Philadelphia. The unresponsiveness of my large audience was more than made up for by the kindness of my chairman,



Mr. George Gibbs, the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ridgeway, and the friendliness of the reporters. I doubt if my English was understood, in spite of being informed that I could be heard plainly from the gallery, and except at my first lecture—when I could not stand—I have had no difficulty in making myself heard.

On my return, after dining in bed, I joined my daughter at a *bal poudré* given by Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, a clever New York hostess who thinks nothing of entertaining a hundred and fifty people to lunch, tea or dinner.

One of the noticeable differences between fashion in England and America is that what might appear to the uninitiated as an almost exaggerated display of hospitality, is as chic here as it might be thought overdone in London. American hostesses are also very particular as to precedence: who sits next to whom; or goes in first, second or third. I must confess to being remiss in these ways, and when an American lady at one of these dinners asked me if I minded my daughter, Elizabeth Bibesco, going in or out—I forget which it was—in front of me, I imagined she was joking. I disconcerted a reporter when he asked me if I knew all of the British aristocracy, by saying that alas! I did not, but that my maid did.

Nothing could have been prettier than the Vanderbilt ball. I look forward to seeing the house of my kind hosts under more normal conditions, but I could see at a glance that it is not only full of rare and valuable objects, but is really striking. The reception rooms, concert hall, and ballrooms were

crowded with fashion and beauty. I gazed about to see if I could find anyone I knew. My eye fell upon my daughter Elizabeth, who in her black velvet Aubrey Beardsley dress was among the prettiest women in the room.

After trying unsuccessfully to detain my beloved friend, Colonel House—who hates parties—I caught sight of Mr. Balfour looking young and happy. In spite of the admiring throng by whom he was surrounded, I skirmished through, and, taking him by the arm, engaged him in private conversation. Being incapable of flattery I told him with what extraordinary ability he had represented Great Britain at the Washington Conference ; how glad we all were that he had been selected ; and how enchanted I was to see him. With the dazzling charm that never deserts him, he asked me searching questions as to how my lectures were progressing, and implored me not to tire myself.

I answered that I was always overtired, but said with truth that neither he nor I would ever grow old.

No one can say that Mr. Balfour does not care for power and politics, but a certain detachment has prevented him from growing old, and by what means I cannot discover, he never appears to be bored in society ; it is this, I think, that keeps him young.

I know something about youth, as the Tennants are a race apart ; not because we are specially clever, learned, famous, or amusing, but because we have no age. I have been told by gipsies, palmists, phrenologists, and other swindlers many senseless



PRINCE AND PRINCESS HIBESCO



and incompatible things, but upon two matters they all agreed. They said I would always be young enough to make love and inspire it, and that I was unmercenary and of a kindly disposition.

In these ways I resemble my father. Sleepless, irritable, impatient, and interested, he could skip and dance at the age of sixty better than most young men in their 'teens, and his last beautiful daughter was born when he was eighty. This is not entirely physical: it comes, no doubt, from vitality; but it is also a mixture of moral and intellectual temperament, and above all things from the power to admire, without which, Wordsworth says, we cannot live.

After talking to Mr. Balfour, my host, Mr. Vanderbilt—a man of character, who cares little for entertainments—showed me his bedroom and his library.

The morning after the ball I contracted a chill which filled me with despair. Having a lecture that afternoon (my fifth in America and second in New York), it was vital to remove the unfortunate impression that sitting down and reading about horses had created upon my first appearance. Unless my secretary cuts out and pins upon my letters Press criticisms of myself, I do not look at them, and I had hardly been aware of the severity with which I had been taken to task the day after my first lecture. People are too strong and busy in New York City to notice if you are ill or not; they have paid their dollars and are not likely to listen to what bores them: they wanted a little local gossip about my husband, Mr. Lloyd George, or Princess Mary's trousseau. I did not mind the abuse as I am Press-proof, but

I did not want to disappoint my manager, Mr. Lee Keedick, a competent, kind man, quite unmercenary, and interested in his client's success, as much from an artistic as a business point of view ; or my secretary, Mr. Horton, with whom I have contracted a lasting friendship.

Knowing that I had to speak not only that afternoon, but the next night at Brooklyn, I reassured them by saying that in spite of my chill I was going to stand, walk about and amuse the audience by stories of Gladstone, Tennyson, Kitchener, politics, duels and drink. I did not add that I was so nervous that I would have to hold my head up high, as, if I dropped it, I would certainly collapse.

My dear friend, Mr. Paul Cravath, in introducing me, made an admirable speech and was more than helpful and encouraging.

I wish I could remember and write down what my chairmen say of me or of my husband, but I am far too anxious to listen, and a cannon going off would not prevent me from struggling to remember my speech, in spite of knowing that " Ladies and Gentlemen " will be as far as my memory will take me.

When I stood up, after bowing with challenging languor, I spoke in a slow and deliberate manner which seemed as if it came from another person. I never looked at my notes until the end of the lecture, and after I sat down the audience were enthusiastic. My son-in-law, Prince Bibesco, a man of acute and artistic observation, congratulated me warmly, and speechless with exhaustion I went to bed.

The next morning my Chairman sent me the following review out of *The World*—

“ IT SEEMS TO ME

“ By Heywood Broun

“ The platform manner of Margot Asquith fills us with envy. We wish we could talk as she does, casually leaning against a table. We must confess to a limitless admiration for her technique. No visiting English author in many seasons has seemed to us so entirely at home as was Mrs. Asquith yesterday afternoon on the stage of the New Amsterdam Theatre. Her utterance is crisp and clear, she is never under the necessity of digging in her heels and shouting. As her point approaches she swings into it, facing the audience square and standing straight. We admired her versatility of delivery. There ought to be many clients eager to be tutored by Mrs. Asquith in the art of public speaking.”

If I could have met Mr. Broun that day, my gratitude might have made me feel well; but I had a temperature, and my daughter having contracted influenza, we were kept in bed and a trained nurse was sent to us by Dr. Eglee.

On the eighth I spoke in Brooklyn, where, wrapped up in blankets, I was accompanied in the motor by my doctor. I remained in bed until the twelfth, when I made my last appearance in New York. By then I had become quite fashionable, and largely thanks to Mr. Heywood Broun, I received over eighty letters a day, flowers, music, books, and poems.

My daughter Elizabeth's illness took away all my joy, and had it not been for her husband and my cousin, Nan Tennant, illness and exhaustion would have tempted me to break my contract.



## CHAPTER V

### WASHINGTON AND THE WHITE HOUSE

*Arrival at Washington—Interview with President Harding—  
Ex-President Wilson—M. Jusserand.*

I arrived alone at Washington on the thirteenth and spoke the same afternoon.

A Washington audience does not deafen you with applause, but Mr. Thomas Hard, my chairman, was so appreciative that he seemed to set the fashion to laugh and cheer and all went well.

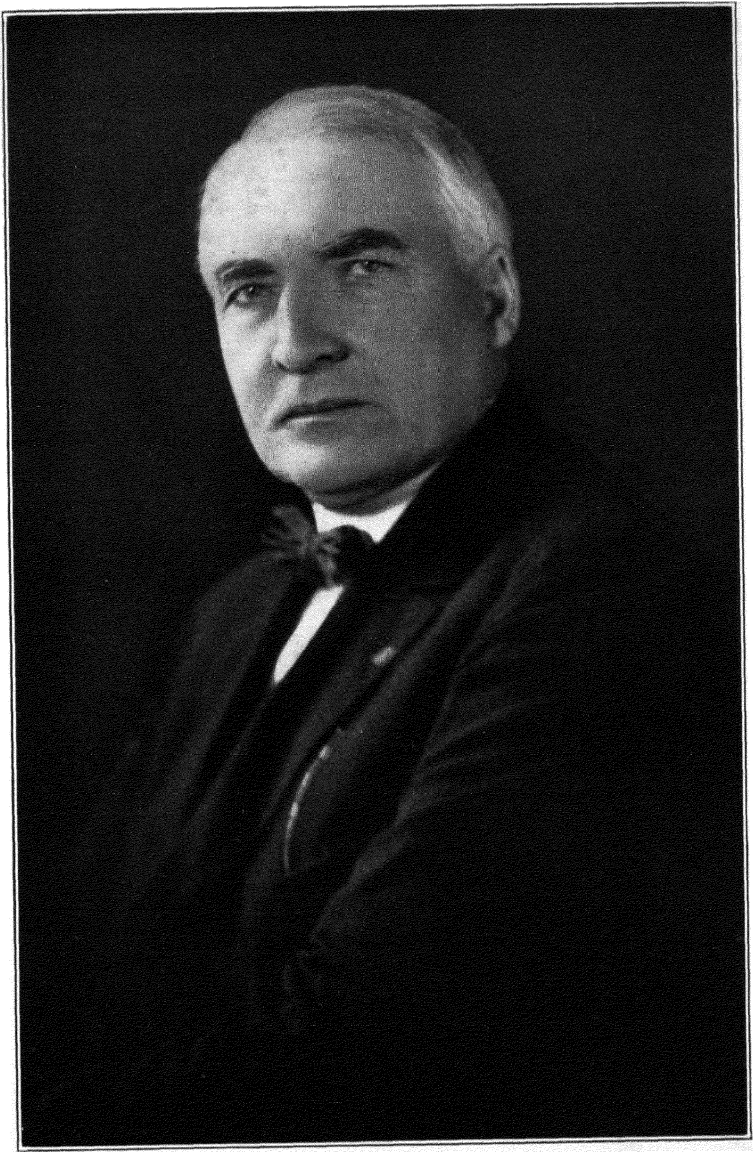
On the following morning, I went by appointment at 10.30 to see President Harding. After driving to several wrong doors at the White House, I was shown into an ante-room full of Pressmen talking and smoking round an open fire. The President's secretary was extremely courteous, and I was not kept waiting. Ushered into Mr. Harding's fine circular room, I shook hands and sat down. A large black-and-tan Airedale terrier sniffed round my skirts, and was ordered to sit in a chair by his master. President Harding has a large, bold head with well-cut features and an honest, fearless address. He is tall, perfectly simple, and extraordinarily easy and pleasant to talk to. He told me he also had lectured, and gave me an

account of how lecturing had first started in America. There was a sort of club or society which began round Lake Chautauqua and spread all over the country. It was the only way that either pleasure or information could reach distant and dreary little towns inhabited by thousands of men and women, who had neither the fortune nor opportunity to meet famous people. While he was telling me this I looked at the big writing table in front of him. I noticed a faded photograph of an extremely pretty, refined, middle-aged woman, and a framed engraving of George Washington ; on the top of a bookcase I observed an interesting print of Abraham Lincoln. A fire in an open grate, and large windows looking out upon a garden with trees, completed the room.

Our talk was interrupted by a secretary asking the President to speak on the telephone, and he left me after a courteous apology.

On his return, he found me looking at the photograph on his table, and informed me that it was his mother. We spoke of Arthur Balfour and I told him how pleased my husband and all of us in England were that he had been able to go to Washington ; that his quick mind, fine intellectual manners, and lack of insularity gave him an unrivalled understanding. The President responded with genuine warmth.

" I am very glad," he said, " that he attended our Conference. As you are aware, Mrs. Asquith, he was known and liked here before the Conference, and I can only say that he has added two hundred per cent. to his former popularity by the patience, tact, straightforwardness and ability he showed throughout our proceedings."



THE LATE PRESIDENT HARDING



We spoke of the Genoa Conference. I said that frankly I was tired of Government by Conference : that, starting from the fatal one at Versailles, to the futile one at Cannes, they had been a source of mischief, misunderstanding, and recrimination ; and that the only one at which the truth had been faced, discussed and spread, was his own at Washington.

After he had signed and given me a facsimile copy of the Message which he had delivered at the close of the Washington Conference, we parted.

I went to the Rock Creek Cemetery with my cousin, Nan Tennant, to see the Adams tomb by St. Gaudens. It is a great work, and clutches at your heart. I sat for some time on the circular marble seat and looked at the beautiful bronze statue. It reminded me of the lines in Richard the Second :

“ Oh ! but they say the tongues of dying men  
Enforce attention, like deep harmony.”

Although the hooded and austere figure takes you far away from all that moves, and is an emblem of Death, the deep and pitying eyes speak to those who will listen, both of Love and of Hope. I thought as I looked at it, what a transfiguring effect a statue like that might have, could it be removed to Paris or Berlin.

In the afternoon, I visited ex-President Wilson. His wife greeted me with kindness and affection, and immediately showed me into the library where her husband was sitting erect upon a chair near the bookshelves. His eye was bright, his mind clear, and no one looking at his distinguished face could have imagined that he was ill. I could not conceal my

emotion when I told him how often we had thought of him. He seemed hopeful about himself, and said he had still much to do, as there was a stern fight in front of him. He asked me if I did not think things were looking better for my husband and "your great Party"; adding how closely, and with what hope he and others were watching the present political situation in England. I told him that he had had the one fine Idea, and that all the world was fumbling to follow in its track; adding that the League of Nations was applauded upon every Liberal platform. He made me promise to go and see him on my return to Washington, and after a short conversation about nothing in particular, the fear of tiring him made me get up and say good-bye.

I went on to the French Embassy where I spent an hour with my old friend Monsieur Jusserand. I found him very unhappy; and when he discussed with frankness and without exaggeration the feelings that were animating Paris, I thought he made out an excellent case for what appears for the moment to be a lack of reason in his compatriots. He showed me what Lord Lee had said in December on Naval Limitation at Washington, where he misquoted from Captain Castex's French articles on submarine warfare, actually omitting the context: "*ainsi raisonnent les Allemands,*" which surprised me very much.

I said I was quite sure that there had been some mistake, and that our Admiralty would instantly offer a public apology if the affair would be brought to their notice; he said that on January the seventh the Quai d'Orsay had expostulated, but that nothing further had passed. That in the same article of

which Lord Lee had reversed the meaning, Captain Castex had made pointed allusion : “ au rôle de salubrité politique, sauvant la liberté du monde joué par la Grande Bretagne pendant la guerre.”

I told him that we were too far away to know what was happening, and that it was more than possible that Lord Lee had already apologized ; that it was a deplorable blunder, as the desire of the French to increase their submarines was understood by the average Englishman to be a menace against Great Britain, as presumably his country would never fight Germany on the sea.

He said that every nation would have to maintain for itself some reserve of Force since they had agreed to a large diminution of their Armies. I begged him to be patient, and to remember that the 1918 Election—so painfully encouraging to the natural desire on the part of the French to pursue a policy of revenge—was not a true reflection of British public opinion ; that perhaps we were lacking in imagination, but we would never acquiesce in crushing a defeated foe, or trying to keep him down for ever. That since no one could get rid of the German race—and France had to remain their neighbour—it appeared to be more sensible to try and discourage Hate which was unproductive ; that there was little choice, unless their intention was to prepare resolutely and steadily for another war. He disclaimed all idea of revenge, pointing out that we were an island without frontiers, and that within the recollection of one generation their industrious and arrogant neighbour had not only killed their people, but laid waste their territory, and added that he and his compatriots did not feel

their moral and financial sufferings had been treated with either sufficient sympathy or justice.

He argued extremely well, and I felt as I left him that we ought to do everything possible to remove the suspicions and heal the wounds of a country at whose side we have fought and died.

I dined that night in a company of fifty at the British Embassy and had some talk with our Ambassador, Sir Auckland Geddes.



## CHAPTER VI

### DETROIT AND CHICAGO

*Guest of the Women's City Club—Countess Minotto, a great beauty—  
The Military Hospital.*

The next morning, we left Washington for Detroit where I met with a warm welcome and lectured with success. I was entertained by the Women's City Club, at whose original invitation I had gone to Detroit. They were interesting women who all had some work of their own to do, and talked to me about serious matters with keenness and freedom. I told them, in saying good-bye, that I had been honoured by meeting them at lunch, and hoped some of them would write when they had time and tell me a little more about their lives.

After lunch, we motored in a beautiful Hudson car—lent to us through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Chapin, introduced to me by my artist friend Nellie Komroff—to the great Ford works at Highland Park. I regret to say I have never understood machinery, and the deafening noise, smell of oil, and endless walking exhausted me. I was also unlucky in finding Mr. Ford away, as I would much like to have met him. He is a man who has rendered great service

to his country, as he has put at the disposal of nearly everybody motor cars of low price and high quality.

We travelled that night to Columbus in the same sort of horrible train—shaky, hot, and stopping outside before jerking into the stations. Upon our arrival, a stranger came up to us on the platform and said he hoped we would let him take us and our luggage to any place we liked ; that he had loved my book and was going to hear my lecture. We were delighted to accept his invitation and were whizzed off to the hotel. Mr. Jeffries, the owner of the motor, was more than kind and enthusiastic. I tried to distinguish his handsome face in a ballroom where I spoke in the evening, but he was in the gallery, and I was too nervous to look much about me.

Ex-Governor Campbell made a witty introductory speech and encouraged my listeners to ask me questions. When it was all over I was surrounded by various ladies and gentlemen of the audience who introduced themselves and each other to me and asked if I would eat ices and drink punch ; but I was dropping with fatigue and even my handsome friend, who was full of congratulations, could not prevent me from staggering off to bed.

I had received a wire from my Manager begging me to go by the seven a.m. train next morning to Chicago in time to see the reporters in the evening. The prospect of this gave me a sleepless night, especially as I was disturbed, first at midnight by a messenger boy with an album which he wished me to sign, and again at two in the morning by the night watchman, who said I had neglected to lock my door. I used unparliamentary language, telling

him that nothing would induce me to lock my door, and after an unsuccessful attempt to settle down I turned on the light and read *If Winter Comes*.

The originality and pathos of this wonderful study reduced me to tears and, more dead than alive, at 5.30 a.m. I told my maid I would have my bath.

The reporters at Chicago were very civil, and I got through the interviews, interspersed with flash-lights, as well as I could. One of the young ladies, following me to the lift, said, "I wish you hadn't been so charming and polite. I would like you to have just rushed at me and pulled my hair out so that I could have got the story."

I looked at her in surprise and disgust as Mr. Horton elbowed me into the lift.

I dined that night with a very old friend of mine, Count Minotto, and met the first woman of real beauty I had seen since I came here. Countess Minotto has long white arms and a transparently pale face; her dark hair, brushed in waves off her forehead was knotted loosely at the back of her neck, and her beautiful eyes glowed with welcome. We talked *à trois* for three hours, and before going away she took me into her night nursery. The nurse woke up, but her lady told her not to move, and after looking at a handsome little boy, she glided to the side of a white cradle. Very tall, in a clinging black crêpe dress, I was struck by the beauty of her attitude, and the tenderness of her expression as, leaning across the cot, she removed the coverlet for me to see her sleeping baby.

I lectured the next night to the biggest and most intelligent audience I had faced since Boston, and

when it was over people came on to the stage to congratulate me and ask for my autograph.

On the morning of the 22nd, I having asked to see the big Military Hospital, a friend of Mr. Horton's—who had been his secretary during his Foreign Office work in Paris—took us out to see the Speedway Hospital.

We had a long and adventurous drive, skidding in circles on the ice, although we went at almost funereal pace. Puffs of steam came up from my feet and seemed to emerge from a furnace. Mr. Horton insisted on stopping at a garage for fear the car would catch fire, and our chauffeur in a rough and ready manner poured cans of water down the window spaces to do what he could to cool the car.

On arriving at the hospital, we were greeted by interviewers and doctors (the latter in khaki); we had taken with us Miss Allard, a lady reporter of first-rate intelligence and fine manners, and we started to walk round. The military doctor wanted, naturally enough, to show me the hospital, which I should imagine to be the largest and most perfectly-equipped in the world. This solid building extends for over half a mile, and is several stories high; but I wanted to see the patients, and loathe long passages, the smell of anæsthetics and all operating paraphernalia. With difficulty I was finally permitted to see the ill and wounded.

It is difficult to make conversation with tired men acclimatized to pain and bed, but I was glad to meet and talk to them although surprised to see no visitors.

I have a feeling, which may be wrong, that the wounded are not getting the attention they deserve

in this country of money and movies, but the Hospital was magnificent, and there at any rate they are treated with efficiency and understanding.

Perhaps I am not competent to judge, but from what I have observed, the men who fought in the war—many of whom have been either permanently disabled or financially handicapped, are in danger of being forgotten, not by the Government, either in the States or any other part of the world, but by the private individual.

The Bonus over here, even if it passes, can never be an excuse for the rich and leisured not to go among the wounded either at their homes or in the hospitals. Gassed, crippled, and shell-shocked, their outlook at the best can but be forlorn, and I am haunted by a fear that in the hustle of life—and what is erroneously called the “return to normality”—the crippled and wounded are neglected. It is understandable that men in business should want to make money, but business principles should not be mainly the reflection of personal interests, and you may pay too high a price for making your fortune.

Except myself, I saw no stranger in the crowded wards of this immense Hospital, and from answers to my questions, I do not think it is the practice among women over here to visit them.

## CHAPTER VII

### PITTSBURG AND ROCHESTER

*More reporters and journalists—The Carnegie Institute—Enthusiasm of the Pittsburg audience—I discover an American “ Flapper.”*

After travelling all night in a train that would not be tolerated for a day in England, we jolted into Pittsburg at 6.30 a.m. on the morning of the 23rd. Reporters and photographers waited in the sitting-room to see me after breakfast, and giddy from the journey, I put my feet upon a sofa and awaited their intelligent questions.

I spoke to three women and one man. The women asked me if I did not think they were advancing rapidly as a nation ; I answered that no doubt interest in international politics was making them less provincial, and with their vitality, intelligence, and resources, their country was bound to exercise enormous political influence in the future, if it was not already doing so. I observed the male reporter demurred to this ; he said that the men of ideas and captains of industry were fighting each other all the time, that there was little or no reverence, and that the American Press pandered to the public taste by keeping them in ignorance of the truth. The ladies

challenged this, and, addressing him as "Bruce," asked if he thought they did not revere their great men and all that was worth while ; adding that they were a young and free nation, and, if anything, going far too fast.

Being appealed to, I felt obliged to say I thought they were the most genuine and hospitable of people, but that in spite of being always in a hurry I had found them slow ; nor could I honestly say I thought them, in any sense of the word, a free nation. I was heartily supported by the solitary man, who asked the ladies where they had observed either the great men, or the reverence ; he said that materialism was sapping the soul of America, that their men of intellect were choked out, and in an aside to me in French—while the photographers were taking flash-lights—begged me to let him stay on after the ladies had departed. I assented, and when the oft-repeated enquiry as to what I thought of " flappers " came up, I listened with absent mind, and without committing myself, to a subject that, while disturbing the moral curiosity of the female questioners, bores me to such an extent that I almost scream when it is mentioned. (Americans are bore-proof.)

After the ladies had gone, Mr. Horton returned with "Bruce." He was the most interesting reporter I have met up till now.

He said he did not know what had happened to the spirit of his fellow-countrymen. Either from temporary restlessness—following the chaos of present conditions—or from a native and ingrained lack of reflection, jazz, hustle and headlines were killing the soul of the American people.

“ There is a perpetual antagonism between the machine, the Press, the money makers, and those who are groping in the darkness to be free. When they see the light, and know the truth, it will be as bad over here as it is in Russia to-day, and, Mrs. Asquith,” he added, “ why should this be? We have men of ideas, and are young and keen; why must what is fine be inarticulate? You won’t believe me, but in this very hotel I heard one man say to another ‘ I never read a line if it is not going to profit me in commerce.’ Imagine that after these five years of anguish all over the world, such a thing could be said! I’m a poor man, never likely to arrive, but I would rather starve than say a thing like that.”

“ Have you read *If Winter Comes*? ” I asked.

He answered that he had; and told me he had been deeply moved over it, but did I believe that such a man as Mark Sabre could ever exist; did I not think he had emanated from a sensitive and creative power, but was not a real being? I replied that it was just because Mark Sabre was so human, and made by God as well as Hutchinson, that the book was great.

“ If we cared enough,” I answered, “ we all have it in us to develop some of Sabre’s qualities, but we must be equally independent of public opinion, equally *tolerant*, and, above all, equally selfless and loving.”

“ You may be right, but what good, after all, did it do him? ”

“ Of course,” I replied, “ if every time we do or say the right thing we expect to succeed, matters would be very simple. It is because we are always meeting



with rebuffs that life is so complicated. We must peg away doing what we can, fundamentally humble and tolerant, and above all despising popular opinion. Believe me, you are not the only country exposed to the temptations you speak of. We can only overcome these eternal inequalities by pity and self-sacrifice, and of this we have been given an immortal Example."

He got up, shaking me firmly by the hand, said, "It was just as well that Christ was crucified when He was, for He would not long have survived the hate and antagonism that His ideas provoked among the conventional, the successful, and the governing classes."

In the afternoon, I was taken over the Carnegie Buildings. By the kindness of Mr. Church, I was rolled about in a chair, and enjoyed the most wonderful Institution of its sort that exists. Dr. Holland—who informed me that he was not only acquainted with all my literary friends in England, but with most of the crowned heads of Europe—accompanied us. Stuffed animals in huge glass cases do not usually attract me, but at the Carnegie Institute they are presented with such life-like skill that I begged to be introduced to the man who had arranged them. He was brought down in a lift from his work, and after shaking him warmly by the hand, I told him how proud I was to meet so great an artist.

Dr. Holland, my chairman of that night, was kind enough to give me the rough copy of his introductory speech :

"Ladies and gentlemen, neighbours, and friends," he said, "written history has been called a 'tissue of

lies.' Most historians, like portrait-painters, feel it to be their duty to impart to the characters whom they are describing a glamour which in many cases is more or less superhuman or super-diabolical as the case may be, and to represent circumstances as they happened in the light of the preternatural. Now and then there arises a writer who is gifted with the quality to see things as they really are, and who, to use a current phrase, 'calls a spade a spade.' In an age of pretence, it is to many more or less shocking to have such persons take up the pen, and, with frankness born of native honesty, tell the truth as he or she may distinctly perceive it. Society is so used to 'diplomatic courtesies' that when the truth-teller arrives society 'takes a fit,' seeing its illusions vanish. Its would-be idols which have been proclaimed as made of pure gold are found to be gilded clay, its devils not so devilish after all, and the daring act of the truth-teller is vigorously denounced by an age which calls for nothing but compliments.

"We have all read, at least I have, with great appreciation, coupled with no small degree of amusement, Mrs. Margot Asquith's Autobiography. I particularly enjoyed it because it gave her impressions of many people whom I have met and known.

"Mrs. Asquith is the wife of the great man who was the Prime Minister of England at the outbreak of the World War. She is here to-day in a city which bears the name of that Prime Minister of England who held the helm of State during the Napoleonic wars.

"I have the honour of presenting Mrs. Margot Asquith, wife of the Right Honourable Herbert Henry

Asquith. She is one of the most famous women of England."

Hampered by the knowledge that we were to catch the night train to Rochester, and inexperienced in timing what I have to say, I found when I sat down that I had cut my lecture short by half an hour. To make up for this, and encouraged by people in the front row reaching up to shake my hand, I invited them to come on to the platform. They trooped up in large numbers, and I held an informal reception which met with unexpected success.

We drove in silence to the station. I had a conviction, which my secretary did not attempt to contradict, that I had been a failure. Mr. Horton said he feared the news of my curtailed lecture might reach the influential Press and prejudice those who might want to hear me in the towns in which I was booked to speak. Knowing in my heart that I had on every occasion received more praise than I deserved, and being of a temperament that is not knocked out by failure, I tried to cheer him up while the nigger was arranging my bed, but without the smallest success.

The trains, both in the States and the Dominion, have every fault ; those in Canada being even worse than those in the United States. If you travel by day, you are one of twenty-four men, women, and children who sit on hard revolving chairs eyeing one another. You cannot stretch your limbs, or smoke a cigarette, and while your ears are deafened by shrieking babies, your legs are scorched by boiling pipes. If you are rich enough, you may get a "Drawing-room," but they do not have them on every train. When you travel by night, men and women are on the top of one

another, buttoned behind an avenue of green cotton curtains. You cannot get your hot water bottles filled, or have tea in the morning. While staggering to your private berth between the leaps of the locomotive you are lucky if you do not fall over the protruding feet of your fellow-travellers, or find yourself sitting on the face of a sleeping lady lying *perdue* behind the hangings. Privacy is unknown, and though I have travelled for thousands of miles I have not yet met the train that, unless you have the balance of a ballet girl, will not give you concussion of the spine or brain.

After a sleepless night, we arrived at Rochester, where I seized the morning papers. Thanks to a charming reporter, Mr. C. M. Vining, who had come a long way to hear me speak at Pittsburg, my lecture had an excellent review.

My stay was so short at Rochester—where I lectured under the auspices of the Press Club—that I had no time to form any impressions of the place, but the people were all very good to me.

On the 26th we met Mr. Horton's mother at Buffalo, a refined, charming old lady, who travelled in the train to Toronto with us.

Meeting Mr. Vining in the passage, I thought if I brought him into our drawing-room it would give my secretary an opportunity of speaking to his mother, and invited him to join us. We had an excellent talk, and I told him that, for the first time in my life, I had seen a "flapper." While waiting in the sunny street outside Buffalo station, I had seen two young, short-skirted, giggling girls, walking with their admirers who were armed with Kodaks.

One of the young men threw a girl over his shoulder, and she stretched out her legs while the other photographed her. I added that, while praying that I would never again be interviewed upon the subject, I would be in a better position to answer my ardent questioners in the future.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TORONTO AND MONTREAL

*Some good stories—Toronto pleased—I kiss an old charwoman—  
Mrs. Haytor Reed and Mrs. Lawford.*

That evening we arrived at Toronto, and I lectured on the 29th. My chairman, the Reverend Byron Stauffer, made a wonderful speech, and I was listened to by an attentive and intelligent audience.

I find Prohibition a fruitful topic of discussion.

For the information of anyone who may think, as I did, that drink has decreased, and that in consequence everyone over here is wise, sober and happy, I can only say the reverse is the truth.

I cannot write of the poorer classes—on whom, in any case, the law is hard—but among the rich I do not suppose there was ever so much alcohol concealed and enjoyed as at the present moment in America. Young men and maidens, who before this exaggerated interference would have been content with the lightest of wines, think it smart to break the law every day and night of their lives. I related to my audience that Mr. Clemens (better known as Mark Twain) had taken me in to dinner many years ago at the house of a namesake of mine (Mrs. Charles Tennant,

whose daughter Dorothy married Stanley), and had told me of a great American temperance orator who, having exercised his voice too much, had asked the chairman to provide milk instead of water at his meeting. Turning to the Rev. Byron Stauffer, who is a great temperance preacher—of which I was unaware—I said, “The chairman—probably a kind man like my own—put rum into the milk, and when the orator, pausing in one of his most dramatic periods, stopped to clear his throat, he drained the glass, and putting it down, exclaimed, ‘Gosh! what cows!’”

I went on to tell of a lady who was letting her house, and, after instructing the auctioneer as to the value of her chairs, furniture and china, had left him in the dining-room where the sideboard had several bottles of wine and whisky on it. She waited for a long time, hoping he would return to show her the inventory, but as he did not appear she went into the dining-room where she found him drunk upon the floor. She looked at the paper he held in his hand and read, “To one revolving carpet.”

Not wishing to repeat the mistake I had made in Pittsburg, I spoke for an hour and fifteen minutes, longer than which no one can be expected to endure, and as we had some time before catching a midnight train, I invited my audience on to the stage. At this the platform was stormed, and I was seized by hands and arms, showered with compliments, and never at any time a robust figure, so crowded and crushed that I felt suffocated. My reverend chairman did his best, but it was not until Mr. Horton,

in a voice of thunder, begged them not to mob me as I had to catch a train, that I was allowed to move. They all rushed to the stage-door, shouting, "We think you are wonderful!" "Why can't you stay with us?" "You must come back!" "You're perfectly lovely!" etc.

We had to lock one of the doors of the green-room, but while I was given brandy, and congratulated by my chairman and his family, a very old charwoman peeped in at another entrance, saying with emotional timidity, "Excuse me, but though I am only a poor old woman who sweeps the stage, I would like to shake hands with you. The last famous person that I spoke to was Mme. Calvé, over whom we were all crazy; I may say she let me kiss her hand."

I turned and kissed the old lady on both her wrinkled cheeks, at which she blessed me and burst into tears. I felt like doing the same, but was steadied by the presence of my jolly chairman and his relations, and it was with a feeling of breathless gratitude that I heard the announcement of our car. Clinging to the arm of my secretary, I swayed through an enthusiastic crowd gathered on the pavement. They were cheering, waving handkerchiefs, and throwing up their hats. Half of the audience appeared to have waited and collected round our motor, and we had the greatest difficulty in reaching it. Knowing that this sort of thing will probably never happen to me again, and with a touch of vanity that I seldom feel, I wished my husband had been there to witness my unexpected triumph.

Upon our arrival in Montreal, I saw the reporters, and in the afternoon I made my speech.



I was introduced at His Majesty's Theatre by a delightful woman, a relative of the well-known Lady Drummond—Mrs. Huntley Drummond—and spoke to a lady-like assemblage in a blizzard of draughts. To quote my beloved and early friend, Mr. John Hay, "I chill like mutton gravy," and had it not been for my chairwoman, who left the stage to bring me my fur boa, I must have contracted a permanent catarrh which would have reduced my voice to a whisper. I was relieved—a feeling which I thought the audience shared—when my lecture was over.

His Majesty's Theatre is an odious place to speak in, and whether from the fatigue of a night journey, or the refinement of my female listeners, I formed an unfavourable impression of the intellectual manners and vitality of Montreal. When I retired to the wings of the stage, I pointed out to Mrs. Drummond two women in the front row whose attention and enthusiasm had made all the difference to me during the lecture. One had a masculine face, with an earnest and beautiful expression, and her neighbour was a lovely creature.

"Those," she said, "are Mrs. Haytor Reed and Mrs. Lawford."

Luckily for me, they came up to the green-room, accompanied by Oswald Balfour—Military Secretary to the Governor-General—followed by an old man with a huge bag of golf clubs, and several other friendly people. The old man showed me a photograph of my father given to him on the links at Carnoustie, which touched me deeply; and my friends in the front row, after kissing me on both cheeks, assured me they had been thrilled by all

that I had said, and only longed to see more of me Lady Drummond—a woman of rare intellect—joined in this praise, and after Oswald—whose mother, Lady Frances Balfour, is the finest woman speaker in England—said that my voice-production, general manner and delivery were professional, I retired from a quelling and critical company.

My host that night was Sir Frederick Taylor, and I met Lady Drummond and Mr. Charles Hosmer in his beautiful house. He was more than kind to me, and I found that they knew most of my personal friends. When Lady Drummond said that I had a beautiful smile and the papers that I had a golden voice, I felt less exhausted on my journey to Ottawa!

No one who has not been on tour in America can imagine the fatigue of crowded elevators, shaky trains, and perpetual travelling.

## CHAPTER IX

### OTTAWA

*Ottawa audiences—The Premier, Mr. MacKenzie King—  
“Sir Galahad.”*

We arrived at Ottawa on the first of March and lunched with Sir George Perley and his wife (who had befriended me upon the *Carmania*). Lady Perley is a treasure of kindness and understanding, and nothing I could ever do will repay her.

At lunch, I met Mr. Meighen and the Canadian Premier. In inviting the defeated Minister and Mr. MacKenzie King to meet each other, my hostess reminded me of the early days when, in my father's house, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Randolph Churchill, and other Cabinet Ministers of rival Parties met and discussed politics.

I was grateful to Mr. Meighen for the cordiality with which he greeted me, as the inventive Canadian Press had added impromptu reflections of their own to what I had said of him. I sat next to Mr. MacKenzie King, but as we had no opportunity of private conversation, he invited me to go to his house for supper after the lecture.

The capital of the Dominion is a beautiful town, wonderfully situated, and in spite of being covered with snow, was alive and radiant with spangles and sunshine.

A greater contrast to the audiences of New York, Boston, Chicago, Rochester or Toronto, than the one I addressed in Ottawa could hardly be imagined, and I recognized some of the apathy and breeding which had characterized my listeners in Montreal. I was introduced to several select and fashionable people, and one gentleman gave me an inventory of our British aristocracy, most of whom he had known and stayed with. I felt like putting my arm on his shoulder and saying with sympathy, "Never mind!" but refrained. When the lecture was over, I motored to Mr. King's private apartments.

The Canadian Premier is a man after my own heart; shrewd, straight, modest and cultured. I was surprised to find how much he knew, not only of the political situation in England, but of the chief characters concerned in it. After discussing Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Churchill, Lord Birkenhead, and Mr. Bonar Law's Canadian friend, Lord Beaverbrook, we talked of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, President Harding, and Mr. Hughes. He spoke with genuine admiration of Mr. Hughes's speech and the Washington Conference, and agreed with me in condemnation of the many futile confabulations that had preceded it.

He asked me about the Irish Free State and Labour conditions in England. As he had settled most of the Canadian strikes, he was interested in unemployment.

I told him the "land fit for heroes to live in" was a less fashionable resort than was generally supposed; and that thanks to the policy of "Official Reprisals" the ground in Ireland had not been prepared in a manner to encourage either Craig or Collins to place implicit confidence in the Coalition. He told me that Reprisals had come as a shock to all thoughtful people; and, pointing to a fine Italian picture of Our Lord hanging on the wall, asked me if His life had captivated me as much as it had him.

I said that following in His steps appeared to me to be the only chance we could ever have of acquiring that purity of heart which would enable us to see God; and walked up to examine the picture.

It does not take a long sojourn in Canada to prophesy that Mr. MacKenzie King will need all his courage and independence if he is able to stand up to the hostility of his Conservative and fashionable opponents; but if he can make himself known to thinking men his Administration ought to prove successful.

The next day, I was again the guest of the Premier, and met one of the two sitting members for Ottawa—Mr. Hal McGiverin; the Hon. Dr. Henri Beland (Minister of Soldiers' Civil Re-Establishment), who had been a distinguished physician in Belgium when the War broke out. He wrote *A Thousand and One Days in a Berlin Prison*, and was taken prisoner by the Germans and confined for over three years. During his incarceration his wife died in Belgium, and he was not permitted to attend her deathbed or her funeral. The Hon. George Graham, Minister of Militia,

whose only son was killed in the War, the Hon. Sir Lomer Gouin, Minister of Justice, and the only other lady, Mrs. G. B. Kennedy, made up our luncheon party. We had general conversation—which my stepson Raymond described as a series of “ugly rushes and awkward pauses”—but on this occasion the method was successful, as we discussed among other subjects politics and literature.

I asked my neighbour what the statue was which commanded such a wonderful view near the Houses of Parliament. He said it was “Sir Galahad,” and had been erected in memory of a deed of heroism, and had no other inscription upon it. He told me a young man called Henry Albert Harper was skating with a friend when he observed a couple in front of him disappear into the river at a sudden break in the ice. He sent his companion to the shore for help, and lying down, stretched out his walking-stick to see if the lady in the water, or her friend, could catch hold of it. Seeing that this was impossible as they neither of them could reach it, he rose to his feet and took off his coat. The other skaters implored him not to attempt to rescue them as it meant certain death.

“What else can I do?” said young Harper, and plunged into the icy current. Their dead bodies were found the next morning.

Hearing that Mr. MacKenzie King had written a memoir of Harper—who had been his greatest friend—I begged him to give me a copy of it. He sent it to me with his autograph in it, and asked me to sign his volume of my own Autobiography. I was truly sorry to say good-bye to the Canadian Premier.

We returned the next morning to Montreal, where I found my room a garden of flowers given to me by Mrs. Reed, Mrs. Lawford, and Lady Drummond. I addressed a ballroom that night full of empty chairs and chandeliers, but was consoled by my flowers, and the ladies with whom I afterwards went to supper ; and hope, and think, I have made lasting friendships with Mrs. Haytor Reed and Mrs. Lawford.

Mrs. Reed told me that the little son of friends of hers, who had always refused to meet a Jew, had disconcerted them one day by saying in a reproachful voice : “ But mother, you never told me Jesus Christ was a Jew.”

Seeing a distressed expression upon his mother’s face, he added consolingly, “ But it doesn’t matter, since God was a Presbyterian.”

Lying awake that night, I wondered what I would have felt had I married a man who had consented to be either Governor-General of Canada, or Viceroy of India. I can imagine no career—excepting, perhaps, that of a minor royalty—that I would have minded as much. Not all the great functions, personal prestige, wonderful scenery, pig-sticking in the East, or skating in the Dominion, would make up to me for friendships without intimacy, and grandeur without gaiety. I came to the conclusion that only men of a certain kind of vanity and ambition, or animated by the highest sense of public duty, could ever be found to fill these honourable positions.

## CHAPTER X

### JOURNALISM

*American Journalism—Reflections on some Great Men—Controversy with Lord Lee—Prince Bibesco—Mr. Hughes.*

We breakfasted at 5.30 a.m. the next morning and arrived at New York at ten that night, to be greeted by a room full of Pressmen. When the female reporters begin by saying to me :

“ What, Mrs. Asquith, do you think, with your close acquaintance with the many trends of the working of a woman’s mind, of the modern probability, etc., etc.? ” I am reminded of Sir Walter Raleigh’s excellent phrase, “ Stumbling upward into vacuity.”

One of these eager ladies, checking her more intelligent male companions, said :

“ Tell me, Mrs. Asquith, is it not true that you are indifferent to the opinion of any living person, and enjoy saying smart and daring things ? ”

I replied :

“ Indeed no ! I leave that to you.”

I told them about MacKenzie King—of whom they had never heard—and what Mr. Horton and I had observed in our travels of the conventionality



and interference with private affairs that obtained all over their country ; that they liked force for its own sake, and that no truthful person could say they understood the meaning of Justice or Freedom.

Trammelled as I have always been by an unfortunate combination of truthfulness and impatience, and exhausted by the journey of eighteen hours, I was afraid I had been neither genial nor informing to the reporters upon my arrival in New York, but on looking at the papers next morning I found they had treated me with friendliness and courtesy.

Journalism over here is not only an obsession but a drawback that cannot be overrated. Politicians are frightened of the Press, and in the same way as bull-fighting has a brutalizing effect upon Spain (of which she is unconscious), headlines of murder, rape, and rubbish excite and demoralise the American public.

I would like to make it clear that it is not the reporters but the owners of the papers that should be censured. With the exception of a few garrulous and gushing geese, who think it smart to ask pert and meaningless questions, the male reporters that I have met have not only been serious and intelligent, but men with whom I have discussed literature, politics, and religion ; but it would not pay their editors, I presume, to publish conversations of this character. On the front page of even the best newspapers, paragraph after paragraph is taken up by descriptions in poor English of devastating trivialities. Violent and ignorant young men, or " flappers "—in whom the public here seem to take an unnatural interest—might easily suppose that their best chance of success in life lay in creating a sensation. Of what

use can it be to create a sensation ? Who profits by it ? What influence can this sort of thing have upon the morals of a great and vital nation ? If Christ, with His warnings against worldliness, were to come down to-day, after giving Him one hearing the crowd would not crucify Him—they would shoot Him at sight.

You have only to examine the newspaper comments upon Abraham Lincoln to see that even in those days abuse and misrepresentation were popular. He was persecuted and vilified every day of his life ; but, like my husband, he was Press-proof.

If editors would only realise it, following public opinion instead of guiding it is ultimately dull, and makes monotonous reading.

In England, we are trying to raise our journalistic standards to the level of the United States, but, without claiming undue superiority, I do not think we shall succeed. There is enough commonsense among our people to mitigate against any such misfortune, and we have only to recall the General Election of 1905-6, when every morning paper in London, except the *Daily News*, was against us, to realise the impotence of the Press.

Fear is as unproductive as it is contemptible, and until some big man has the courage to break the power of the Press in America, progress out there will always extend beyond civilization.

I motored in evening dress for three hours to a suburb of New York. I am so tired of the abominable trains that an aeroplane or perambulator would be a relief, and the road to Montclair was full of interest. The sky was throbbing with carmine and gold, and

the varying lights of green and white, reflected in a river sentinelled on either side by high black buildings and pointed towers, left an impression on me of Whistler-like beauty.

We dined with excited and hospitable people, and I lectured to an enthusiastic audience. I do not know how it is with professional speakers, but with the amateur the chairman and the audience make the speech. The Reverend Swan Wiers introduced me in an address of eloquence for which I thanked him warmly.

I arrived in Providence next day to be interviewed by three young ladies. After the usual questions upon Princess Mary's underwear and the "flappers," one of them said she had come to ask me about England's greatest man. I told her we had so many that I would be grateful if she could indicate the one she meant.

"Will you tell me who your great men are?" she answered.

"Well," I said, "we have Hardy, Kipling, Lord Morley, Lord Grey, Lord Buckmaster, and Mr. Balfour."

"Oh, no!" she replied, "I want to hear all about Lloyd George."

"I fear you will have to read about him yourself," I said, "and if you can wade through the daily columns of films, flappers, murders and headlines, over here, or anonymous gossip about Downing Street in my country, you may discover what you want to know."

The other ladies intervened when she retorted, "Then you refuse to tell me?" and as—the electric

light having gone out all over the hotel—we were squinting at a single candle, I thought it as well to put an end to their intelligent questions.

The Providence audience consisted mostly of empty chairs, but it was an enormous hall, and when the lecture was over a few of the 500 listeners came up to ask me to sign my name in various albums and on slips of paper. They said, “You have given us such a wonderful lecture to-night that you must come back here.” To which I replied smilingly, “Never in this world! To speak for an hour and fifteen minutes to people who never clap is like hitting one’s head against a wall.” At which one of the ladies said, “You are quite right, Mrs. Asquith, there is great apathy and lack of manners in Providence.”

“Why should you clap,” I said, “if you are not interested?” At this they all protested. “We were afraid of missing a word of what we were enjoying,” said one charming woman, to which I replied, “I would have stood as still as a statue if one of you had thought of cheering me!”

We took the midnight train to New York, where we arrived at six the next morning, and I felt that I was returning home.

On March 8th, the *New York Times* published on its front page :

“LORD LEE DEFENDS AMERICAN YOUNG WOMEN !

“Mrs. Asquith’s charges cruel, ludicrous,  
and untrue !

“Speaking at the English-Speaking Union luncheon, Lord Lee said the statement attributed to the famous

countrywoman of his now in the United States was as cruel as it was ludicrous and untrue. He added that he could testify from thirty years of personal observation in America, and from reliable information from various quarters ; and that he was speaking seriously."

Lord Lee has only got to travel over here for ten days to change his opinion. I, also, am speaking seriously, and am strongly in favour of temperance. Liquor control has been, among many other reforms, the political ambition of my husband ever since he became a Cabinet Minister; but, as what is called "the Trade" has the votes and blessing of the Conservative Party in England, all our Bills to control it were frustrated by the House of Lords.

We drink less than our forbears, not because we are more moral, but for reasons of health. Our people are fond of sport ; and you neither shoot nor ride as straight if you indulge in champagne, port, liqueurs, brandies, and other drinks overnight.

The first question I was asked when I landed upon American soil was whether I approved of Prohibition. I said I thought it was a fine idea and an example that would ultimately be followed by the whole world ; I presumed that light wines and beer would in time modify this somewhat exaggerated measure ; but as most of the men convicted of crimes of violence had been proved to be under the influence of liquor, the prisons and asylums would gradually be emptied. I added that many of the famous, as well as young men of promise, and some of the best servants I had known in my life had been ruined by drink, and that it was a subject upon which I felt deeply.

I could see at once that what I said was unpopular, but I repeated the same opinion in all my early lectures, adding that gout, rheumatism, arthritis, and other nervous diseases have been, if not contracted, certainly assisted by alcoholic poisoning inherited from generations of men who drank too much, and I am a convinced anti-drunkard, but a very short visit over here has convinced me that Prohibition, *as at present administered*, is both "ludicrous and cruel." The well-to-do can get the drinks they want, and young men and women, as well as adults, share with their friends and admirers all the pleasures that go with defying the law. I have no doubt from what I have been told that the power of the Saloon League Lobby had to be smashed, and that the men who accomplished it deserve the highest praise; but can anyone truly say the Prohibition law is kept? Are Mr. Volstead or Mr. Pussy-foot Johnson satisfied with the present condition of things in their country?

There is a text in St. John, "The truth shall make you free."

There is no lack of truth over here, but there is a complete lack of freedom, and I think the Press—which is kept informed of what is going on—might do much more than it does upon this subject.

On the 10th my daughter Elizabeth took me to a fashionable Charity Fête in a large New York ball-room, where I heard my son-in-law speak for the first time. I envied him his self-possession; for, though I am told that my demeanour does not betray me, I am so nervous before the so-called "lectures"

that I eat nothing ; and so exhausted after, that the mildest meal gives me indigestion.

Having suffered from audiences that, while more than appreciative, seldom clap, Mrs. Frank Polk and I were determined that Antoine Bibesco should not experience the same embarrassment. Our friendly intentions were frustrated, however, as everything he said was received with enthusiasm. His handsome face and fine manners, and the popularity of his wife (though it is not usual to praise one's daughter), have made them much loved in this hospitable country.

On leaving the entertainment I was waylaid by a female reporter.

"Is it not true that but for His Highness Prince Bibesco you would never have published your diaries, Mrs. Asquith ?" she asked.

To which I replied :

"I have not published my diaries. I have written the first volume of my Autobiography, encouraged by some of my friends—but no one has criticized my literary efforts with more perspicacity and insight than my son-in-law."

The gallantry of Mr. Nelson Cromwell and the presence of mind of Mrs. Frank Polk rescued me from further conversation.

Mr. Clarence Mackay invited me to a concert in his beautiful house after dinner, where I met some of the American men that I am most devoted to—Mr. Polk, our ex-Ambassador Mr. Davis, and Colonel House. I sat next to the latter with whom I had a good talk, and, what with hearing Kreisler—the greatest living violinist—and being in a position to observe

the glowing enthusiasm of Elizabeth, and the melancholy expression of her husband, I was consoled for the midnight journey which we took to Washington when the party was over.

My love for my grand-baby, the titter of talk, the tissue paper of unpacking outside my door, and the "miaowing" of "Minnie" the cat, prevented me from resting upon my arrival in the morning, and when I went to the Senate after lunch I could hardly keep awake. The Four-Power Treaty was being discussed, but the debate was languid, and more seats were unoccupied than Senators speaking.

Except for a Tribune, the Senate reminds me of the "Chambre" in Paris. Everyone walks about, and you cannot be sure that any of the Senators will speak from the seat that they occupied the day before, which makes it rather confusing to a stranger.

At 4.30 I went to see Mr. Hughes in the Department of State. He is remarkably handsome, and has not only a striking intelligence, but charming manners. We said nothing worth recording. I told him what, alas! he must have heard a thousand times: the profound impression that his opening speech on Disarmament at the Washington Conference had created in my country, if not all over the world; and what perhaps he did not know so well, that there never was a closer feeling than that which exists between England and America to-day.

When I say this with all the eloquence I can command at every lecture, though it is always cheered, it is seldom reported, and I read in one of the papers, "What Mrs. Margot Asquith said about the hand-





PRISCILLA, DAUGHTER OF PRINCESS ANTOINE BIBESCO



clasp of Great Britain and the United States is doubtful if not conventional.”

I am glad to be called unconventional, but what I say is not doubtful ; it is true.

I see that in one of Byron’s recently-published letters, he writes to Lady Melbourne :

“ I wish that —— would not speak his speech at the Durham meeting above once a week after its first delivery.

“ Ever yours most nepotically,

“ B.”

But in spite of Byron’s wise warning I repeat the same thing in every lecture, because I feel passionately that it is not only important that the English-speaking nations should stand side by side, but vital to the Peace of Europe.

## CHAPTER XI

### BALTIMORE, SYRACUSE AND NIAGARA

*Baltimore—Syracuse, a University City—Two unknown correspondents—Niagara and its disfigurements—A Cincinnati tribute.*

On March 13th my daughter and her husband motored me to Baltimore, where, after speaking to a responsive audience, we took the midnight train to Utica, and went from there to Syracuse. This is a university city of culture and beauty, and I wished I had had time to see more of it.

I was introduced to my audience by Dean Richards, a lady of ability and high standing in the college, and several people came up and spoke to me behind the scenes when the lecture was over.

I have received many remarkable letters and invitations in every city I have visited, not only to lunch and dine, but even to stay in private houses. Had I but realized the great distances over here when I left England, I would have started earlier and made a longer tour; but I am going home for my son's Easter holidays and have therefore been obliged to refuse much hospitality. In case anyone reads these Impressions, I would like them to know how deeply

this spontaneous generosity has touched me. I will quote a letter which was put into my hands at Syracuse :

*March 13th, 1922.*

“ MRS. ASQUITH,

“ Dear Madam,

“ When a person has bestowed upon another a gift—such as ‘ The Diary of Margot Asquith ’—ought not the favoured one to give an expression of appreciation to the donor ? I think so. And this conviction must be the excuse for my making so bold as to address you, Mrs. Asquith, to thank you for giving us—who live in so different a world to that of yours—a glimpse of your spirit, so colorful, so vivid, so noble. And the charm of it is that this color, vividness, verve, and charm is not carried consciously and heavily—but is borne lightly, charmingly, like an ornament—a jewel.

“ I am not young, nor given to raptures ; I am older than you, and I am only thanking you for the radiance your writings have thrown upon my life ; and when to-morrow night I see and hear you at the Opera House in Syracuse, you may perhaps care to know that one among many happy people is enjoying a completeness she had not dreamed would come to her.

“ With all good wishes to Mrs. Asquith here on our shores, and beyond the seas, I am,

“ Sincerely yours,

“ E. A. S——.”

There have been other letters I would like to quote, but for fear of boring my readers I will end with the following, written from Chicago :

“ TO MARGOT ASQUITH,

“ I read your volume a year ago and at once decided, if it was a girl, I would call her ‘ Margot.’

“ Tuesday night at Orchestra Hall I heard and saw you. Your enthusiasm, your zest for life, the airy grace of your movements and the charm of your smile will live in my memory always.

“ Here’s hoping that some of the wealth of your qualities will go with the name ‘ Margot ’ to my little one.

“ May you live long, Margot Asquith, is the wish of

“ M. M. F——”

On the 16th we arrived at Buffalo where, after seeing the usual army of photographers and reporters, we motored twenty-five miles out to Niagara.

I had always imagined the drive to the Falls would have been long, slow, dangerous, and steep ; that this amazing spectacle must be situated in a wild and lonely place, with possibly one romantic Hotel encircled by balconies for the convenience of tourists who had travelled from great distances to see it ; whereas it is approached by a straight, flat, and crowded road, with tramcars pursuing their steady course the whole way from Buffalo City. The Niagara Falls, so far from being in a lonely spot, are surrounded by gasometers, steel factories, and chimney-pots. Of their beauty and magnificence it would

be as ridiculous as it would be presumptuous for me to write, but when my maid said she had expected them to be more "outlandish," I did not contradict her.

Mr. Horton's brother told me of an Irishman who, on being asked to express his opinion, answered, "I don't see what is to prevent the water from going over," but I felt almost too depressed to laugh.

You might have supposed that the whole neighbouring population would have risen like an army to protest against a hideous city of smoke and steel being erected around the glorious Falls of Niagara, and it was characteristic of the population of Buffalo that our chauffeur did not pull up at the Falls, but, upon our stopping him, said he had presumed we wanted to go to the power station.

If I ever return to America, I shall not be surprised if a line of "safe-sailing steamships" has been engineered to go down the Niagara Falls.

I do not think that in Scotland either the country of Scott, or the Ettrick Shepherd, nor the passes of Killiecrankie or Glencoe, will ever be deformed for commercial purposes.

As a complete outsider with a short and hurried experience of the United States, this has struck me more than anything else. Beauty, which is so obvious in the architecture, and other things, seems to be under-estimated, and where Nature should dominate, I have been shocked on every road that I have travelled by the huge billboards, and advertisements of the most flamboyant kind, which irritate the eye and distort the vision of what otherwise would be unforgettable and inspiring. It is much

the same everywhere. In Chicago the Michigan Boulevard, with the lovely lake on one side, and grand buildings on the other, running at enormous width for a long distance, is one of the finest broadways in the world ; but it is spoilt by a vulgar erection at the end, advertising something or other against the sky, in electric bulbs of rapid and changing colours.

I found the people I met were chiefly interested in the following report of " Indignation Meetings " :

" Blame Girls for ' Snugglepupping ' and ' Petting Parties ' in Chicago." " Male Flappers' Parents Hold Indignation Meeting." " Boys who don't follow Fair Companions' pace called ' Sissies, Poor Boobs and Flat Tires.' "

I have only seen two hoardings that have really interested me. One was, " A Good Name." The other, " Wanted, a Rare Man : aggressive yet industrious, fighting, yet tactful and dignified. He must have a good education, and an appearance which will give him an *entrée* into the best homes."

I would much like to be presented to any of the men who will answer these advertisements, though I have no doubt they are tumbling over one another.

From Buffalo we went on to Cincinnati, where I read in one of the newspapers :

" MARGOT

" Margot Asquith, wife of the former Prime Minister of England, is in Cincinnati.

" Men who like to believe that they know more than their wives would not be happy with a woman like



Margot for wife. She knows more than most men, and there is scarcely anything she cannot or will not talk about.

“ She wrote a book that is an encyclopædia of the inside history of British politics and history of her time.

“ There aren’t many like Margot. Husbands who, long after the honeymoon, like to be entertained will envy Asquith his Margot. It must be pleasant to have a Margot in the house.”

I expect the writer was pulling my leg—to use a slang expression—or possibly pitying my husband; but it amused me.

## CHAPTER XII

### ST. LOUIS

*St. Louis—The Ladies' Club— The Mayor.*

We were met at St. Louis station by a vast crowd of photographers, reporters—male and female—headed by the Mayor, a grand fellow called Henry W. Kiel. He motored me to the Hotel Statler, where my rooms were full of roses, and in spite of an iron bed, we were more than comfortable. I am like stuff that is guaranteed not to wash, so I sat down at once to talk to the reporters, among whom I observed one man of supreme intelligence. Caustic and bitter, he interrupted the females and asked to be allowed to return to us after dinner. Mr. Paul Anderson and I had a first-rate discussion, while my secretary typed and telephoned till, with his usual consideration, he came back to send me to bed, where I remained like a trout on a bank, with piles of old *Times* which Mr. Anderson had brought me.

I read details, for the first time, of Mr. Montague's resignation, and smiled over the belated theory of the joint responsibility of our British Cabinet. When one recalls the many conflicting opinions expressed by every Minister without rebuke, culminating in the

Admiralty note upon the Geddes Report, the Prime Minister's indignation is more than droll. I presume the Conservative wing of the Coalition wanted to get rid of Indian Reform as interpreted by the Viceroy and Mr. Montague, and I shall watch with interest the action that Lord Reading will take upon the matter.

Arresting Ghandi was as unwise as stealing a cow from a Temple ; but from such a distance political comment may be as belated as the theory of Cabinet responsibility ; and the inspired agitator—beloved of his people—may, for all I know, be governing India at the present moment.

St. Louis is among the most interesting cities I have visited. The Mississippi is commanded upon both its banks by huge buildings, and spanned by grand bridges. There is a private park as large as the Bois de Boulogne, and an open-air theatre with oak trees on either side of the stage. The school buildings and Washington College are of perfect architecture, and I was grateful to Mrs. Moore—a woman of sympathy and authority—for driving me out to a lovely club-house for tea, which gave me an opportunity of seeing the environment.

I was entertained the next day at a private luncheon given by a ladies' club, and was glad to be sitting next to dear Mrs. Moore. Observing a single gentleman seated among the company I asked in a whisper who he was ; upon being told he was a reporter I said, in an aside to my other neighbour, that for the rest of the meal I would confine my remarks to, " Yes," " No," or " I wonder ! " and " How true ! " Upon this the unfortunate young

man was conducted from the room. He had a peculiarly charming face, and when I saw what had happened I said I was afraid I also would have to leave the table, as I could not allow any guest to be insulted for my sake ; at which he was allowed to return. I apologized to him, saying that though I had imagined this to be an informal gathering at which no newspapers would be represented, I did not wish him to be treated with any lack of courtesy, and hoped he would not make copy out of any foolish thing I might have said. He was particularly nice, and, although I shall probably never see what he has written about me, I am willing to "take a chance"—as they express it over here.

After I had signed my name 23 times—as flattering as it was fatiguing—the Mayor came to fetch me away. Mrs. Moore and two other ladies accompanied us on a motor drive to see the city. The Mayor—who is a big man—sat rather uncomfortably between me and Mrs. Moore, and said that, with the permission of the other two ladies he proposed to put his arm round my waist, as being engaged to speak at a meeting of the Boy Scouts he would be unable to attend my lecture in the evening. I told him that after this nothing but bribery and corruption could re-elect him as the Mayor of St. Louis.

"Then I shall return to my original occupation, Mrs. Asquith ; I started life as a bricklayer, and I have not forgotten my trade, at which I am unrivalled."

The ladies said he was much more likely to be returned as their political representative, and after asking "Joe," his chauffeur, to stop and enable

him to buy me cigarettes, he took me back to the hotel.

I found a beautiful bouquet of orchids on my table, to which was pinned a card from one of the ladies whom I had met at lunch: "From Mrs. Hocker, with best wishes for a successful evening at St. Louis, to absolutely the most brilliant and interesting woman it has been my privilege to meet either in America or Europe."

I need hardly say that I clung to my bouquet that evening! I was escorted upon the stage by Judge Henry Caulfield, the City Counsellor.

Mr. Anderson, of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, returned to talk to us after the meeting, and I can truly say that after "Bruce"—whose real name I never discovered—I found him the most interesting Pressman that I have met. I wrote to his editor congratulating him on having such a man upon his staff, and received a grateful reply.

Never having been interviewed till I arrived in this country, I do not know in what way reporters of intellect here would compare with ours, but it passes my comprehension to understand why those whom I have met are content to write for papers that seldom print what is either informing or interesting.

One of them said to me, "We do not publish news, Mrs. Asquith, we concoct it."

## CHAPTER XIII

### KANSAS CITY AND OMAHA

*Kansas—Mrs. Edwin Shields—American speaking voices—  
Omaha—A Story of President Lincoln—The Governor of Kansas.*

We travelled to Kansas City the night of the lecture and were met upon our arrival and taken to the country house of Mrs. Edwin Shields.

After greeting her, I observed her fine tapestries, oriental china, portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and other Old Masters, as well as modern French pictures. We ate porridge, eggs and bacon, and grape-fruit for breakfast, off an oak table with Irish linen napkins, and I observed the refinement of my hostess's little face, and the pretty quality of her voice.

I do not think the voices here are very musical; they are nasal and a little loud, and though Americans have a great deal of geniality and love of fun, I am so slow at picking up the language that I probably miss much of the irony and finesse that characterize their kind of humour. The Canadians, who are of British stock, have a better sense of humour; but it is always a dangerous subject to write about, and when I remember the stupid

things that evoke the laughter of the London public in our theatres I feel I had better walk warily.

I am Scots, and as a nation we have been accused of lack of humour. I cannot be expected to agree with this; nevertheless, I remember being told in my youth of a man who had said, "Oh! aye; Jock undoubtedly jokes! but he jokes with facility. I joke, too, but with difficulty."

The French have a far finer sense of humour than any other nation in the world, and all they say is a constant source of delight to me.

It is pardonable not to laugh at what is amusing, but sudden guffaws at bad jokes are the test of a true sense of humour.

After breakfasting with Mrs. Shields, I asked her to show me over her beautiful house. I was reminded of Glen by the freshness of the chintzes, and general feeling of air and comfort which I met wherever I went.

We started at midday for Omaha, where we arrived in the evening. I felt less sad at parting with my hostess as I knew I was going to spend from 7 a.m. till midnight with her on the 24th. She is coming to Europe this summer when I shall look forward to entertaining her in London, as well as in the country.

After leaving her, Mr. Horton told me she had said to him that till she met me she felt like a flower that had grown on clay soil and that I had helped her to break into the sunlight. I was deeply touched, and am encouraged to hope that some day I may be worthy of so rare a compliment.

Upon our arrival at Omaha, we were met by an open motor lent by Mrs. Kountze, who had invited

us to stay with her in her town house, but fearing that three of us might be embarrassing, we decided to go to the hotel.

Omaha is a lovely city, with avenues of trees on either side of wide boulevards, and within easy reach of stretches of wild and beautiful country. As our hostess had been obliged to go to New York, her kind relations conducted us to see the wonderful views surrounding the town.

After speaking in the afternoon to an encouraging audience, with Mr. Hall, the British Consul, as my chairman, I dined with Mr. and Mrs. Ward Burgess. They were more than hospitable, and had it not been for the severe figure of my secretary standing in the doorway, my jolly host, who had entertained me for two hours at dinner, would have prevented me from catching the midnight train.

We returned to Kansas City early on the morning of the 24th.

On being informed by Mrs. Shields's butler that her maid had already called her, I had a bath, and dressing as quickly as I could went downstairs.

Her sitting-room was a garden of roses, lilies and antirrhinums, and I shall always remember our unforgettable *tête à tête*.

We started upon personality, and the difficulty of expressing what was true without hurting anyone, or acquiring character without becoming a character part. The difference between originality and eccentricity; kindness and tenderness; sympathy and understanding; and the delicate grades by which your attempts at goodness may either help or hamper your fellow-creatures.



It is an eternal problem ; and the morally lenient and socially severe is what you encounter every day of your life. I confessed how much I resented the shortness of life and urged her to realize this, as she appeared to me, in spite of having a genius for friendship, to be self-contained and lonely. She was responsive, and said many encouraging things to me. I said that somewhere or other I had read that Marcus Aurelius had begged us to keep our colour. I was not very sure of the correct text ; but that the idea was that some of us were born red, some yellow, and others grey, but that, however this might be, the point was to keep it ; not so much by contrast or conflict with the other person, but to complement it. Great scientists, mathematicians, or philosophers may manage to develop their personality alone, but what they write will not have the key that the writings of men who are nearer the earth are able to present to ordinary human beings.

At one of Abraham Lincoln's great meetings, he had to walk through the crowd to reach the platform. He heard someone say as he passed : " Is *that* President Lincoln ? Why, what a common-looking fellow ! "

At which he turned round and said : " God likes common-looking fellows or He would not have made so many of them."

I told her how much I had been moved by her remark to my secretary that our friendship would help her to emerge out of clay soil ; adding that the desire of my life was to replant myself in a bigger pot every year, and that what she had said would encourage me to go on. After a certain age we were

liable to become stationary ; and the ravages of war, so far from having regenerated, had retarded civilization. We were interrupted by Mr. Henry J. Allen, a guest who arrived long before the luncheon hour.

The Governor of the State of Kansas is a man of authority—not only intelligent but intellectual, always a rare combination, and it needs no witch to predict a great future for him. He remained at Mrs. Shields' lovely house in Cherry Street from 11.30 till 6 in the evening, in spite of having an appointment at 4, from which I inferred he could do what he liked.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PROHIBITION

*America and the War—Prohibition—Kalamazoo.*

I sat next to Mr. Heath Moore at lunch and discussed many subjects ; among others, the motives that had brought Great Britain into the war. He expressed himself with vigour and frankness, and said that nothing would induce him to believe that our purpose had been moral. That our trade was in danger of being outrivalled, and the German navy had developed into such a formidable menace that after France had been defeated our own shores would have been immediately attacked by the Germans ; it was therefore humbug to suggest that our motive had not been one of pure self-defence.

As this was the first anti-British note that I have heard since my arrival, it interested me.

I asked him where he imagined our ships would be when the German Dreadnoughts sailed into our harbours : and what sort of reception the British people were likely to give the enemy crew even supposing it could land an army—never a very easy matter : and concluded by saying I had not been kept awake by the fear that the Kaiser would succeed

where Napoleon had failed. He stuck to his point and said that but for the violation of Belgium we would not have entered into the War. I answered that no doubt this made it easier for the party in power—of which my husband was the head—because among the many convictions that divide Liberals from Conservatives is that we believe in freedom, while they believe in force : and that imperialism meant militarism, against which we would fight for ever. But, I added, no British Government of whatever Party would have watched with folded arms the whole German navy sail down our coasts to attack France.

He inquired if my husband had felt any qualms *when he took upon his shoulders this great decision*. I answered that not only he but our Foreign secretary (now Lord Grey), Lord Crewe, and others, had made up their minds from the first moment : and that in one year—thanks to the Committee of Defence, Lord Haldane and Lord Kitchener—we had produced a large voluntary Army ; and had he been in England at the time, he would have been struck by the pathos and silence with which men of every class joined up to fight in a war which was not their own, against a foe for whom they felt no hatred.

He asked if England had been disappointed that America had come in so late to help her. I confessed that in a moment of pique I had exclaimed that had I been Christopher Columbus I would have said nothing about his discovery, but that I doubted if Great Britain would have come in any earlier to help the United States had they been in a similar quandary.

Someone asked me privately if I had lost a child in the war. I said that my little boy had been too young to fight, but that both of my sisters, three of my brothers and my husband had lost their sons ; that living in Downing Street in the first years of the War had been an anguish the depth of which no one could realize and I could not discuss.

We had refused to drop any of our German friends in London, and in consequence became targets for the abuse and calumny of our social and political enemies.

Mr. Heath Moore gave me an account of the savage manner with which the German population over here had been treated when America joined the Allies. He told me, among other things, that one of his fellow-countrymen in a great recruiting speech had been interrupted by a man in the gallery who was understood to have shouted :

“ Hurrah for the Kaiser ! ” At which he was kicked and beaten down the stairs to the street ; and but for the intervention of a policeman would have been killed. When asked what he had done, the unfortunate German said his only son had been killed in the war, and that he had shouted : “ To hell with the Kaiser ! ”

This was mild compared to some of the cruelties related.

It is always dangerous to generalize ; but the American people, while infinitely generous, are a hard and strong race, and, but for the few cemeteries I have seen, I am inclined to think they never die. They thrive in rooms as hot as conservatories, can sit up all night, eat candy and ice-creams all day,

and live to a great age upon either social or commercial excitement without leisure.

When I left the room to rest and think over my lecture, I was afraid I had not shown sufficient consideration to Mr. Heath Moore or his opinions, so that I was relieved on being informed that he had proposed himself to return to dinner the same evening. I hope we shall meet each other again, as he is a man of compassion and originality.

I lectured after dinner, and before I had finished I fixed my eyes upon Mr. Heath Moore sitting next to Mrs. Shields and spoke of the moral motives that had made Great Britain enter into the War, apart from her friendship with France. I said that while the French had sacrificed everything, and fought magnificently, other countries had been animated by the same motives, and in the end the War had been won by a League of Nations.

I dealt at length with the cruelty with which the Germans had been treated in the United States and at home, and was cheered when I said that had Christ come down among the civilian population at any time during the war His sense of justice and compassion would have earned for Him the title of pro-German.

We went back to Cherry Street before taking the midnight train.

I was introduced at supper to several people of the City of Kansas, all of whom I found interesting. One man said to me :

“ I knew you had charm and personality, Mrs. Asquith, but you must have spoken on a hundred platforms to have acquired such courage and eloquence.”

I gazed at him, and on seeing he was perfectly serious I was dumb with surprise.

Everything in life that I have cared for I have done pretty well. There are two things which, had I cared for, I think I would have done very well: writing and speaking. I have an unstrainable voice—clear and low—and have a lively sensibility to what is copious. I would easily see if I were boring my audience, but I am too nervous to prepare my subject matter in a manner likely to help me. All careful preparation is fatal to my style, and eloquence, if not spontaneous, is apt to be ridiculous. Anything that frightens me a little I find enjoyable, but more than that drains and paralyses my nervous system, and no habit or practice would ever overcome it. I shall never be a great speaker. I love writing for my private amusement, but I cannot modify myself sufficiently to suit any public. I court criticism and am indifferent to the Press, but I do not want to hurt the feelings of either the famous or the obscure, and had it not been for the encouragement of my husband would never have published a line in my life.

We left Kansas City and changed at St. Louis on our way to Indianapolis, where we were met at 7 a.m. the next morning by Mr. Paul Anderson: we all had breakfast at the station together, and I was sorry to say good-bye to him.

I read, quoted from a London paper, that Mr. Balfour had been made a peer.

After travelling all day on the 26th, we arrived in sousing rain to hear there were no porters at the station. On inquiring if they were on strike, I

was told that there never had been any porters at Kalamazoo.

Loaded with luggage, we paddled like ducks in the mud to an inferior hotel.

As we had lunched at midday and there was no dining-car on the train, we were annoyed to hear that no one could get any food after 8.30 p.m., but, luckily for us, there were still ten minutes before the restaurant closed, so we devoured what we could. On the next day, I was told by reporters and other people that an eminent divine had said in a sermon that, thanks to my belief in intemperance, I was not a fit and proper person to give a lecture, and in consequence, my audience of the evening was not all that I could have desired. I had something to say about bearing false witness against your neighbour, but the few that were there were more than enthusiastic, and I was embraced by a woman from Peeblesshire.

I was grateful to have the following cutting posted to me :

“ CAN’T STAND THE TONE OF A MORNING  
CONTEMPORARY IN REPORTING MRS. ASQUITH’S  
ADDRESS

“ Editor, *Evening Telegram*

“ Sir—I am a busy man, and have not much time to write letters, but I can’t stand the sneering, cheap remarks of the *Globe* in their account of Mrs. Asquith’s summing-up of prohibition.

“ Mrs. Asquith did not give stories of a ‘vulgar nature,’ ‘depicting an individual half-stupid with drink.’ Note the hard Pharisaical way in which they



gloat over the word 'drink.' Reminds me of the cheap old-fashioned 'temperance' poems. Mrs. Asquith quite properly and honestly called attention to the farce of prohibition laws, and merely voiced the opinion of ninety per cent. of all honest people when she decried the unjust and unconstitutional 'blue laws' which the bigoted and ignorant minority of the Canadian and American people are trying to enact and enforce on the unwilling majorities—the real taxpayers.

“Would to goodness we had more such women, fearlessly candid, broadminded, and un-hypocritical like the same Margot Asquith. England, with all her faults, will never pander to the few fanatics who are the real oppressors, depressors and joy-killers.

“F. J. PAGET.”

## CHAPTER XV

### NEW YORK AGAIN

*Return to New York—Letter from Governor Allen of Kansas State.*

After travelling two days and a night, we arrived in New York on the evening of the 28th to find Elizabeth and her husband waiting for the elevator to take them to a play ; they were ready to throw this over, but I told them I was too exhausted to talk and only longed to get to bed.

I have not been to San Francisco, but if I were an American I would live in New York City. St. Louis, Syracuse, Omaha, Washington, are more beautiful because of their environment ; but there is life in the air, and a general atmosphere of gaiety and movement which I find infinitely stimulating in New York.

We saw *The Truth about Blades*, and *Kiki*, two plays that were wonderfully acted ; I enjoyed every moment of *Blades*, and the heroine of *Kiki* would make her fortune in any play.

On Sunday the 2nd of April I went to tea at the studio of my friend, Mrs. Komroff. I have known her for many years, when she was Nellie Barnard, and I do not believe there is any artist living who can

paint children in water-colour in the manner she does. The room was crowded with friends and artists, and the portraits that were displayed filled us with admiration.

Among many letters I received the following from Governor Allen :

“ State of Kansas,  
“ Office of the Governor,  
“ Topeka.

“ *March 30, 1922.*

“ THE GOVERNOR,

“ My dear Mrs. Asquith,

“ I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of my book on the Industrial Question. I hope you will forgive me for intruding it upon you. I have so many delightful recollections of the keen and instructive things you said at Mrs. Shields' house that I now find myself full of regret that the conversation continually drifted into general discussions which robbed us all of an opportunity to hear more of your conclusions.

“ Your generous comment upon Kansas City and the West has made us all happy, and as a citizen I want to express my hearty appreciation of your compliments to this growing section of the country.

“ I do not wonder that you drew from my remarks the conclusion that I am “ illiberal.” I was stupid not to realize that your definition of the word liberal is different from that which characterizes it out here just now. In your world “ liberal ” is an honourable word. Over here it has come through misuse to

denote a peculiar class whose reaction is anti-government. The anarchist, the socialist, the communist and the bolshevist are all put down in one class, and the word liberal is thundered at them by orators and editors. It isn't fair to the word.

"If you have time, I'd be awfully glad if you would look over *The Party of The Third Part*, because it relates to a program of industrial peace and justice which the President has recently indorsed in a message to Congress and which New York is now trying to write into her state legislation. Doubtless if the law is held to be constitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States, several States in the forthcoming legislative sessions will adopt the principle of impartial adjudication of labour quarrels when those quarrels occur in the essential industries of food, fuel, clothing and transportation.

"I am sincerely glad you came to the Middle West, and I am grateful to Mrs. Shields for the delightful privilege of meeting you. I hope you will have a safe and happy voyage and that some day you will come back to America.

"Yours sincerely,

"HENRY J. ALLEN."

I was proud and pleased to sit one morning to Baron Meyer, the greatest photographer that ever lived, poor praise for an artist who can express himself in whatever he touches. If I die on the *Mauretania* going home, which is more than likely as the sea seldom forgives bad sailors, I am certain of leaving something to my family that they can look at without repugnance.

We were entertained at lunch by Mr. Arthur Brisbane, a famous journalist and friend of Elizabeth's. I sat between him and Mr. Hapgood and had an excellent conversation. They both spoke in high praise of Elizabeth's book: *I have only Myself to Blame*.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FAREWELL

*Popular feeling against Prohibition—My last lecture—Points of American superiority.*

On April 3rd—the day before I sailed for England—I went out early to buy toys to entertain my grand-baby on our voyage in the *Mauretania*, and had an interesting talk with one of the many civil salesmen that I have met all over the United States in their beautiful shops. He said he regretted that he would not be able to attend my last lecture, although he had been to the other three in New York, because he feared the daughter of a friend of his was dying. She was a little girl living in a suburb who had fainted some weeks before. Her mother had given her the only stimulant they had in the house; since when she had suffered from blood-poisoning, and was lying in a critical condition.

“I do hope, Madam, you will deal to-night with the abominable law of Prohibition. It has encouraged this country to manufacture liquors of the most dangerous kind,” he said.

I told him I heard the same complaint wherever I had been, and while sympathizing deeply with him

feared I could do no more, as I had dealt freely and at length upon the subject.

I was advertised by the following card to make my last speech :

FAREWELL LECTURE

under the auspices of

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF ROUMANIA

Founded under the August Patronage of Her Majesty  
Queen Marie of Roumania

MARGOT ASQUITH

will close her brilliant and successful tour by delivering  
a lecture entitled

IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA

I put on my best dress, and armed with a bouquet of rare orchids given to me by my chairman, made my final public appearance in this country.

As Mr. Nelson Cromwell, who introduced me, is a fluent orator, and had a great deal to say while paying a fine tribute to my husband—and knowing that I was to hold a reception afterwards, I cut my lecture as short as I could.

Among the other subjects, I dealt with the exaggerated belief over here in commercial success ; and the dangerous self-interest and lack of leisure which were encouraging not only this, but every nation in materialism.

I had read in the morning papers a typical example of what I meant :

“ First have what people want.

“ Then let them know it.

“ *Through advertising* is the Secret of Success.

“ The old way was to let the people find it out gradually and slowly, in time for your grandson to get rich. The modern way is to have it TO-DAY, and make everybody know it TO-MORROW, or, if possible this AFTERNOON.”

I told them what I had observed at the Niagara Falls, and spoke of the many hideous bill boards and advertisements that desecrated the scenery wherever I had been, and pausing over the one among others that had really interested me : “ A GOOD NAME ” was interrupted by my chairman, who exclaimed in a clear voice : “ ASQUITH ! ” This met with immense success.

I ended by saying that few countries really cared for one another. It was not rivalry or jealousy that produced this indifference, but a certain blindness of heart. We were part of the same family if we would only realize it, and had had a terrible object lesson in imagining that any of us, however much we prepared or tried, could succeed in crushing the other. We had seen enough hate, and enough death ; and I passionately hoped that the English-speaking nations all the world over would try a new departure, and do what they could to promote friendship and love.

. . . . .

The next day we sailed for England in the *Mauretania*.

. . . . .

If I were to finish without criticism, it might be said that these pages should not have been called



“ Impressions ” but “ Experiences ” ; and against this I have not only been warned, but adjured.

Nevertheless, it is difficult, without appearing unfriendly, to write with candour upon matters that have moved me in my American tour.

It must be said that the architecture, regulations of street-traffic, arrangement of flower-shops, plumbers, and telephone service are infinitely superior to our own ; but these are not criticisms, they are facts, the truth of which is not disputed.

I realize that there is not a nation in the world that extends such a generous welcome to the many strangers who go there as the United States. But admiration for my husband, and the publication of the first volume of my autobiography—which aroused both favourable and unfavourable comment—prevented me at the outset from being a complete stranger. Indeed, many of the people who attended my lectures seemed to know all about me ; and I was surprised, when, crowding on to the stage, they sometimes exclaimed : “ But you are so different from what we expected you would be ! And you haven’t told us what you think of us.”

I begged them to be frank, and tell me without fear of offence what they had imagined I would be like ; but they could only repeat : “ I don’t know ! but somehow we thought you would be the very opposite of what you are.”

When I tried a little clumsy chaff, by saying : “ I am sorry to have disappointed you ! ” it was always met with a protest ; and on one occasion I heard a man say to the woman who was with him :

“ There you are ! I told you all along ; but you wouldn’t read the book ! ”

At which the woman grasped me by the hand and said : “ You are writing another volume of your life aren’t you, Mrs. Asquith, in which you will tell us everything you think about us.”

I explained that I was writing an article on my Impressions of America for immediate publication, and the second and final volume of my life, which would come out in the winter.

Cuttings were sent to me from papers of a flattering kind : “ The Margot Myth,” and others, which said it was abundantly clear that I was in a chastened humour ; and by guarding myself from my critics, was exercising a caution that deprived me of all spontaneity ; or words to this effect.

These remarks are of little interest, but they tend to show how much some people and nations depend on the approbation of others ; and are the reason why I am going to finish with a short summing-up.

## CHAPTER XVII

### REFLECTIONS

*Vanity of Americans—Interest in Royalties and in the English aristocracy—Plea for Anglo-American Friendship.*

LONDON.—It is probably wiser in writing impressions to keep the conclusions you arrive at secret ; and many may ask—and with justice—“ What can a woman know who arrived on the 30th of January, and left on the 4th of April, of America or her people?”

In answer to this I can only say that in those thirteen weeks I saw and talked to more varied types than I could have done had I remained in New York, Chicago or Washington for as many months. I met and conversed with Senators and niggers, farmers and reporters, judges and preachers, hotel proprietors, mayors, solicitors, soldiers, shopmen, doctors, men of science and commerce, and a few of the rarer class of both the fashionable and the leisured. During this experience there are certain things I observed that I shall take the risk of writing down.

The Americans, while the most friendly people in the world, are too much concerned about each other ; and though not personally, are nationally vain. They

would rather hear themselves abused than undiscussed ; which inclines one to imagine that they are suffering from the uneasiness of the *nouveau riche*.

What do they think of us ? or How do you compare our men and women and their clothes and customs with your own ? was the substance of every question that was put to me.

But have any of us ever heard an Englishman or Englishwoman ask a foreigner what he thought of us, or—if silly enough to do so—care a brass farthing for the reply ?

Some will say that this comes from pride, insularity, or what not—nor would they be wholly incorrect. But we are a sporting race, hating professionalism of every kind, and would think it beneath the dignity and paralysing to the independence of gentlemen if we were to interfere with people's affairs and opinions as they do in the States.

In spite of true generosity and kindness, I was aware of an undercurrent of illiberalism and ferocity which amazed me.

In every city that I have visited, there are clubs, both male and female, to forbid or promote some triviality, and until these are reduced America will never have a true sense of proportion.

Because there is little reverence and no reserve, people do not necessarily become of one class. We cannot regulate equality, since we are born with different brains, natures, and environment, and so far from being equal, there is such a rigid regard for precedence in America that you are even congratulated after a dinner-party because you have been seated “ One off Mrs. ——.”

While more than severe on anyone who accepts a title, there was no detail too insignificant about our Court or aristocracy that did not excite an almost emotional interest in my audiences. Every day of my tour I received letters begging me to tell them more about the life and habits of our upper-classes or anything that I could "about Princess Mary's underwear."

If these letters had been merely the cackle of the feminine goose who likes writing to an advertised person, I would have torn them up, but they were sometimes signed by men, and often expressed the opinions of important local editors.

One night after I was in bed, having had a long talk with an intellectual reporter upon the dearth of painting and literature in his country, he rang me up to say his paper was annoyed that he had not brought back an accurate description of my hat and dress.

He apologized profusely, but said that that was what the public really cared for; that none of our discussion upon Lincoln, Edgar Allan Poe, *The Marble Faun*, William James's fine style, or anything else of interest, would be printed in the morning paper, but that the description of my dress—silver, gold, and embroidered with peacocks' eyes—would give great pleasure, and what a female reporter told him I had said to her of Princess Mary's marriage being one of love, would be enlarged into a leading article. I said I forgave him waking me up, but that I had never mentioned our Royal family, and had, of course, invented the dress.

The next day I read that I had said I was "On smoking terms with Queen Mary."

You may say that certain journalists of a similar type pander to the same curiosity in what is low and vulgar over here, but it is more harmful in the States because the Press there has real power which it has not got here.

So far from guiding public opinion, the papers in America stimulate all that is worthless, and you may search in vain to find carefully-reasoned criticism upon art, music, poetry or international affairs.

England has been called a nation of shopkeepers, but I think we spend as much time upon moors and playing fields as Americans do in elevators and offices.

Perhaps we waste too much time on grass and games; but this has encouraged a certain aloofness from other people's doings and produces the necessary leisure for a quiet mind.

Owing, perhaps, to the difficulties of the climate and the overheated rooms, the voices of even the nicest people appeared to me to be loud, and however generously you may have been entertained, you are left with a sense of exhaustion, which it would be difficult to explain.

The excuse of being a young country will not continue to cover the rush and noise and lack of privacy that prevail; and the number of small children that I have seen in hotels, shops, and restaurants that go to bed at midnight after sucking candy between enormous meals, is not promising for a nation which is always growing up.

The ingrained idea that because there is no King and they despise titles the Americans are a free people is pathetically untrue; and you have only to watch

the working of the Prohibition Act to see the dangers of repressive legislation. There is a perpetual interference with personal liberty over there that would not be tolerated in England for a week.

It is probably due to our passion for under-statement, and to the fact that we have inherited wise and tested regulations, that the British are a law-abiding race ; but I think if the Americans were given a chance they might be the same. I can only say that if they are not, Democracy will prove as great a failure as Tsardom.

It is enormously to the credit of the American public that they have never chosen a man of bad character as their President ; and that they produced in Abraham Lincoln a man of genius, ability and courage who will live for ever in the hearts and minds of every country in the world. Nor must we forget that he dominated the people in spite of a campaign of calumny by the Press only equalled by the one to which my husband was subjected in the days of the War.

Men at the head of affairs, if they wish to achieve anything, must be independent of public opinion, and never try to conciliate a Press that in all fairness must be described as—with a few exceptions—not attempting to guide for more than a transitory moment *anyone* to *any* goal.

The present Government in America from all I heard—some of its heads I had the honour to meet—seems to be an admirable one, and working smoothly in times of exceptional difficulty. President Harding has had the wisdom to get good men round him, and is himself a man of open mind and wide views.

With some of the faults I have found during my tour I am told that *The American Credo* (given to me by my friend Mr. Anderson, of the *St. Louis Dispatch*) deals with searching fidelity. I daresay when I read it I shall learn where I have been wrong ; but in criticizing as I have done, I am merely fulfilling the promise I made to write my impressions which at best can be but superficial.

Among thoughtful people there is a great deal of pro-American propaganda going on in this country, and in conclusion I would like to say that there is so much that is fine and keen in the American race, so much that is disarming and lovable, that if I have written anything exaggerated or erroneous, I should feel of all people the most ungrateful.

I can only plead to be forgiven where I have erred ; as I was not only shown unforgettable courtesy and friendship, but I feel it is vital to the peace of the world that our people and those of the United States should understand and care for one another.



MY VISIT TO  
SPAIN IN 1923



# MY VISIT TO SPAIN IN 1923

## CHAPTER I

### MADRID

*I leave London with Anthony—The Prado—Mr. Arthur Rubinstein—Toledo—The Queen of Spain—Palm Sunday Processions—Count Romanones.*

After my travelling experiences of the previous year, I had made up my mind to become a Little Englander, but the progress of America is not so interesting as the backwardness of Spain, and a vision of six weeks' holiday with my son, and Holy Week in Seville, determined me to face the trains, the ships, the baggage, and the passports.

On the 19th of March, 1923, Anthony and I left London for Madrid. Rumours first of France and then of Germany giving way; photographs of famous babies and infamous parents, and leading articles on "Liberal Reunion" had given a dateless monotony to the newspapers, and I was glad to put a Spanish "Baedeker" and "The Brothers Karamazoff" into my writing-case before motoring to Victoria Station.

What is called in nautical language "a following wind" was blowing between us and the sun as we stepped on to the steamer—appropriately named the *Engadine*. Aimless gulls screamed and dived, and thick mouse-coloured smoke vomited out of the funnels as we steamed out of Folkestone Harbour.

I sat shivering on the deck, and examined my son's literature on the chair beside me.

Jowett's translation of *The Republic of Plato*, *A Set of Six*, by Joseph Conrad, and three paper books of Hugo's *Spanish Conversation Simplified*.

"I am very sorry for it.

They were not very sorry.

Are you not sorry for it?

He acted under my orders.

She died the next morning.

Do it again.

He could not do it even if he wanted to.

We were very sorry not to find them at home.

It may be so, but I very much doubt it.

You have lost the letter.

Where is the letter that they have lost?"

Knowing that I may have to use this phrase, I look at the opposite side of the page and read "Búsquelo cuidadosamente," and wonder if I should pick up the Spanish language easily.

On arriving at Boulogne, we were nearly swept off our feet by the rush of French porters up the gangways; clutching my hat, bag, and boa, I observed my pink ticket of landing flutter into the sea: nothing but the pressure of baggage from behind saved me from being conducted back for examination on board

the *Engadine*. We arrived in Paris after four, and had an early dinner at Baron Edward Rothschild's beautiful house.

Stopping on the way, I had a little conversation with an intelligent Frenchman from whom I bought fruit and sweets.

He asked me if the British had much ill-feeling against the French. I answered that most thoughtful men in my country believed that what the French were doing would bring them neither peace nor money, and that it was damaging trade and good-feeling all the world over. Trade in the long run was what made for co-operation among rival races, and the more work there was for everyone the sooner we would live in peace. He muttered something about justice and God—but remembering our policy of official reprisals in Ireland, I did not like to refer to the teaching of Christ.

I realized rather sadly that he was merely expressing with moderation what I am likely to hear from every Frenchman when I return to Paris, and wondered if I would be converted to his views before I got home.

In the middle of the shaky night I looked at the bunk above me to see how Anthony was sleeping, and saw him writing on music-paper.

"What are you doing? Can't you sleep?" I said.

"I'm writing an unaccompanied choir to *Nunc Dimittis*," he answered.

We arrived an hour late at Irun the next morning, and after endless walkings, processions of porters,

and parleyings over passports with rude and stupid officials, we returned to the train and had coffee. My maid told me that in the night she was half-asleep when a woman crept stealthily into the carriage and took my umbrella out of the hold-all, at which she jumped up and seized her by the wrist ; the woman dropped the umbrella, and disappeared like a cat down the corridor.

We arrived in Madrid on the night of the 20th, and motored to the Palacio of the Duke of Alba.

The Duke of Alba's English butler met us at the station and gave us an excellent supper in the Palacio de Liria. It was a relief to be understood, as in spite of Hugo's *Conversation Simplified* and a Spanish grammar—studiously read by Anthony on the journey—our combined gift of expression amounted to little or nothing.

Our first day in Madrid was given up to a survey of the town and a long visit to the Prado. As there are two thousand pictures—and hardly any of them negligible—we confined ourselves to the ground floor, and after that wandered round the basement.

There are sixty Velasquezes, forty Titians, twenty-one Van Dycks, and an amazing collection of the Venetian and Flemish Schools. Among the most beautiful of the smaller canvases, the Mantegna, and Velasquez' "Views of the Villa Medici" gave me intense pleasure ; but all comment upon pictures or the Prado would be as pretentious as it is superfluous.

The beauties of Madrid as a town have to my mind been underrated. It is not only "situated on an elevated steppe commanding distant views of great

beauty," as Baedeker says, but has many statues and buildings of charm, and, whether from the climate or what I do not know, the light and shade are strongly marked, and everyone is clean, the children of rich and poor being equally well dressed. Long lines of mules led by small donkeys, double rows of solemn oxen dragging heavy carts by their horns and the many-toned whites and greys of the stonework make up for the abominable surface of the streets. The weather seems to be very much the same as it is in a fine English spring, nor have we encountered that dangerous subtlety of climate which in "Baedeker" is supposed to kill a man while it will not blow out a candle.

On the 22nd my son went by train to spend the day alone at Segovia, and when he returned we dined at ten, and visited Mr. Rubinstein, who is giving a series of Spanish concerts.

Arthur Rubinstein would have been a remarkable man in any walk of life. He expresses himself with equal freedom and precision in French, German, Spanish, English, and Russian. He is an artist in every sense of the word, without any of the nonsense and vanity that goes with this definition. (People who are advertised become self-centred, and unless fundamentally modest the famous are apt to deteriorate.) He has a genius for friendship, and an insight into men and their motives, rare with one as young and favoured as he is.

"My friends I keep as precious possessions, never allowing myself to see half as much of them as I would like. I prefer intimacy to familiarity," he said.

I told him constant disillusion had made me cling to strangers ; that I never passed a child without emotion, as children were the only beings that had never disappointed me ; to which he answered :

“ I also feel the same—children and dolls.”

On the 23rd, we motored with the duke's butler, taking our lunch, to Toledo. Both Athens and Rome are overloaded by hideous modern buildings, and bill-boards spoil all that I saw in America ; but Toledo—after Venice—is probably the most untouched and unspoilable town in Europe. As the Cathedral did not open till after two, we drove to the top of the hills and had lunch, sitting on rocks, and looking down at the domes, spires, and little huddled houses of every shade of grey, white, and yellow that were flooded by a hot and steady sun.

People who have never been to Toledo would hardly profit by any attempt of mine to describe it, and those who know and love it would be exasperated. “ Baedeker ” tells all that is worth knowing about the cathedral, synagogues, and pictures, and no living writer could describe the rest—the slow river, white bridges, narrow streets, and stillness of neglect which have a lasting impression on the least thoughtful. On our return we dined at the British Embassy, and I noted without surprise the popularity and fine appearance of our ambassador, Sir Esme Howard. (He and his wife showed us unforgettable courtesy, only equalled by M. Merry del Val, the Spanish Ambassador in London.)

On the 24th, we went to Rubinstein's concert at five-thirty in the afternoon.

The hours in Spain are peculiar. The upper



classes get up at one p.m., and dine unpunctually at ten. We never went to bed before two a.m., and had we gone to balls or parties we would not have been in bed before five or six in the morning. My own hours are just as inconvenient as those of the Spaniards, and waking up as I do at six obliged me to rest from seven to nine, or I should not have kept my head, or—to quote the Honourable Crasher—"my stupidity" at any evening entertainment.

A musical audience in Madrid is far from encouraging. Rubinstein's hall was packed, but when he came in he might have been the attendant who dusts the piano, you could have heard a pin drop; but the moment he began to play—after bowing to the Queen, who never misses any of his concerts—the audience started coughing, snorting, and crackling their programmes; in vain did I and a few others say "Hush!" They continued clearing their throats, and in the intervals rushed out, disturbing everyone as they pushed past our hats, and bruised our knees returning to their seats. Nothing could have exceeded the beauty of Rubinstein's playing, and he heaped coals of fire on the heads of his audience by playing several encores to their repeated clappings.

In the evening we joined him and his friends, the Kochanskis, at a tavern in the town, where we sat round a table listening to a decayed singer of local fame till far into the morning. The Marquis de Narros, the Cte. and Ctese. de Chevas de Vera, and a few men, were of the party, and a wonderful guitarist accompanied the strange Flamenco songs of a nasal Moorish kind only known to Spanish gipsies. After

the first hour I found myself hearing more than listening to the melancholy monotones of the voiceless but inspired tenor.

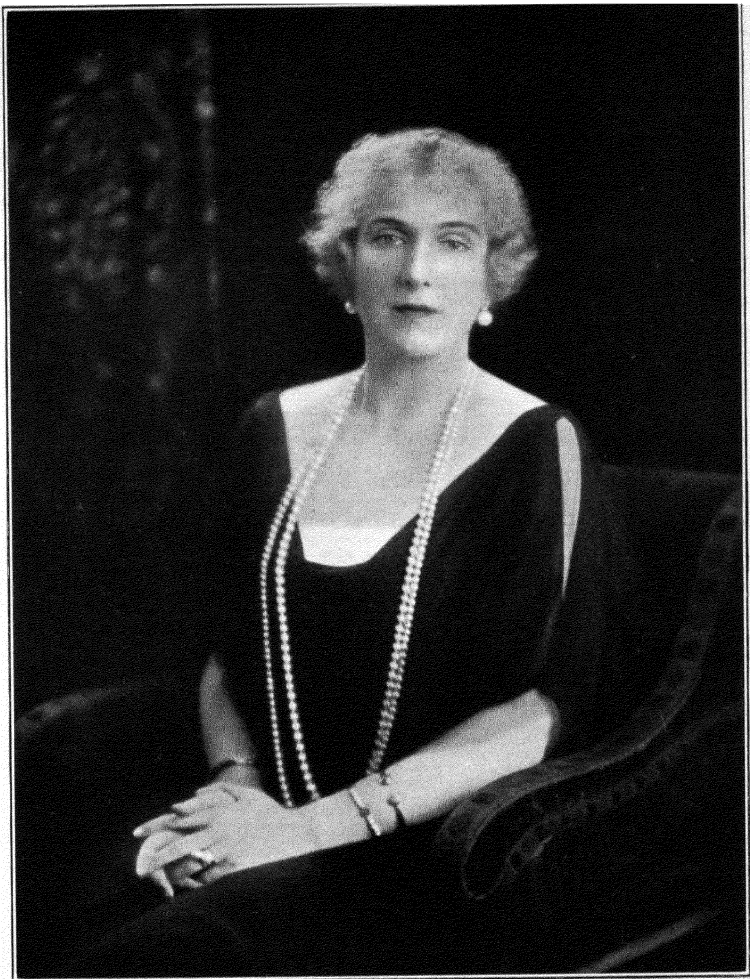
The next morning we were received in audience by the Queen—after going over the fine rooms of the Palacio de Oriente, accompanied by an intelligent and courteous maid-of-honour, Miss Heredia.

The Queen was welcoming and beautiful, and spoke of her strong desire but uncertain intention of visiting her mother, Princess Beatrice, in England this summer.

I told her we were sorry to miss the ceremony of Good Thursday—in which she and the King wash the feet of poor beggars, in full Court costume—as we were going to Seville for Holy Week. She explained to me that, though an ancient custom, she disliked it very much ; this surprised me, as most Royal ceremonies are merely spectacular, and end by being glorified Lord Mayors' shows from which you return empty and exhausted. Not wishing to appear rude, I answered that I imagined it would have been one of the few Royal obligations that I would like to have performed.

I have often wondered what part of a Royal life I would have enjoyed ; whether the sense of a thousand duties accomplished would make up for the endless public platitudes and grandeur without gaiety that one would have to endure, or whether what George Eliot says is true when she wrote “ that beneficent harness of routine which makes silly men live respectably, and unhappy ones live calmly.”

After looking at her children's photographs, and answering inquiries about my husband, my son-in-



H.M. THE QUEEN OF SPAIN



law, Elizabeth, and my grand-baby, we made our respectful obeisance and left Queen Victoria.

Rubinstein and Kochanski played, danced, and sang to us late into the morning, and the next day we went to the palace to see the ceremony of the King and Queen, the Court, the Corps Diplomatique, and every Grandee in Spain being blessed in the Royal Chapel, after parading the great corridors crowded with the populace.

It was Palm Sunday, and we all had to wear mantillas. We stood jammed up against the stone walls of the corridor, and looked at an avenue of beautiful carpet cleared for the procession; silver and gold lanterns of fine design hung at intervals from a carved ceiling, and faint sounds of military music came through the high windows giving on to an immense outer court-yard. Only the ladies of the Court and the Cabinet walked in the procession; all the rest were the Generals, the Admirals, and the male aristocracy dressed in a magnificent mixture of velvets, brocades, fur, feathers, and cloaks. Kindly ladies in broken English explained who some of the more conspicuously dressed men were as they passed.

"You see, madam, that little man with the blue and silver—no, not that one, the smaller with the gold tassels, who walks so bad; he is noble from four sides, and is of the greatest in Spain, yet no show of distinguished mark. They are gone down in the family for a long time past, and the mans are all like womans."

I am always rather stupid in a crowd, and am reminded of the lady in *Punch*, looking down a telescope at two gulls swimming in the bay.

Her husband is pointing to a man-of-war on the sea-line.

“ Yes, yes, darling,” she says, “ I see ! There are two.”

When the King and Queen passed—he in scarlet and steel, she in silver and diamonds—I noticed he held himself better than any of the others, as the slowness of the pace inclined the less concentrated to waddle.

After they had passed, Miss Heredia bustled us off to an arctic *baignoire* with a gloomy narrow window looking on to the interior of the Royal Chapel, and we listened to the mumbling of the High Mass, and watched the courtiers as well as the ladies curtsy to the King and Queen, who were seated on a raised velvet dais with a finely-worked canopy over their heads. It was a fine sight seeing the Queen walk slowly in her long silver train, curtsying first to her King, and then to the High Altar, before kneeling to the bishop to be blessed, and given a high palm to carry back to her seat. When the King and all the others had done the same, they proceeded again through the crowded corridors, carrying their palms high and straight.

We lunched at the Embassy, and dined with Count Romanones—the late Prime Minister—with whom I had a long political conversation. To my surprise, he discussed Liberal Reunion, and I answered him by quoting the *Morning Post's* article on Henry's speech at Cambridge in answer to Mr. Lloyd George's oratorical offer in Edinburgh.

The description in the leading articles of Henry's response to this fine gesture as proffering “ the frozen

mit " delighted him. Turning to my left-hand neighbour, I found him equally interested in foreign affairs. He thought Mr. Lloyd George had been exposed, and was no longer a serious politician.

He said it had been his French policy which had been his fundamental blunder—that he had changed too violently from exaggerated encouragement at Versailles to violent damnation. He agreed with me that the French were a people of genius, though not very reasonable ; and that they were at heart the greatest military nation in the world.

## CHAPTER II

### SEVILLE

*The Cathedral—Easter Processions—Rubinstein once more—Shopping—Bull Fights—An early morning entertainment—Dora, a famous singer and dancer.*

We left Madrid on March 28th, and arrived at Seville at ten p.m. on the same day. The next morning my son and I went to the cathedral to see the archbishop wash and kiss the feet of the beggars.

We walked through an outer court of orange trees in full fruit, with women in mantillas sitting about on the ground playing with their lovers and children. As I have never been to Chartres, the Seville Cathedral, after Rheims and Lincoln, is the finest I have seen.

The interior was dark, but the brilliant stained glass shrouded in black veils, and vast pillars draped in crimson velvet striped with silver—upon which the sun cast rainbow glints of colour—made a dazzling effect upon our eyes as we entered.

There is less flummery of stucco blue Virgins, painful Christs with wire crowns, and painted lilies than is usually seen in Catholic cathedrals, and the black kneeling figures dotted or grouped looked like flies in proportion to the immense heights of walls and altars.



There was so much going on in the side chapels that we had no difficulty in seeing the principal performance.

In magnificent garments the archbishop read the lesson from a gold pulpit of ancient design, and walking down on a raised platform he approached two rows of beggars. These had towels over their shoulders, and had taken off their boots and socks in front of the watching people. Priests and dignitaries wearing magnificent vestments accompanied him, and one carried a basin. The archbishop knelt, and washed, and kissed the feet of every beggar, to the accompaniment of strange and inferior music.

When the ceremony was over, we returned to the Hotel and after lunching with Arthur Rubinstein, we walked out to see the famous Easter processions, for which we had been given places by the mayor in front of the Municipal Buildings.

The long unguarded route was lined on one side by rows of chairs, and on the other (where we sat) the platforms were raised in storeys on which there were open boxes hung with coloured draperies. Neither carriages, carts, nor motors were allowed in the streets, and though I saw few policemen, everything was orderly, dense crowds of people in black thronging quietly to their places. The mayor and corporation showed us great civility, and Princess Beatrice and all the grand ladies of Seville, in mantillas, were in the Royal box next to us. Vast bejewelled canopies, crosses, Christ, and the Virgin, carried by men of low and high birth, stopped and turned cumbrously to salute the Royal box as the procession passed at a funeral pace.

The ceaseless jabber of the idle ladies in open boxes, even when the image of Christ on the Cross was passing, caused me intense irritation.

The Roman Catholic religion inspires neither awe nor reverence. On the most ceremonious occasions the congregation intermix with their bobbings and crossings spitting of a disgusting kind. All through the shows and ceremonies of Holy Week in Seville I had a vision of the Ettrick Valley and the winding road to our parish church of Traquair.

We watched the people and the processions from five in the afternoon till 8.30, when we returned to the Hotel.

After a late dinner and resting till midnight, we walked about the streets among the people to see the various minor processions till two a.m., when we joined a vast crowd standing in front of the high, closed doors of the Church of San Lorenzo, for the final procession of the "Cofradía de Jesús del Gran Poder"—an order dating from before the Inquisition—who were to follow barefooted the image of Christ bearing His Cross through the streets of Seville.

The interest of this ceremony lies in the fact that most of the nobility and their sons are allowed to take part in it as an act of penance, and all the great ladies lend their jewels to bedeck the Virgin.

Mixed and distant sounds of bells, bands, and bugles, and the shrill voices of acolytes singing, relieved the fatigue of standing for over an hour, gazing at a shut door, among the palms and orange trees under a cold moon.

When at last the doors of the church swung slowly open, every light in the square was turned out; the men took off their hats, and there was a great silence.

Black-hooded figures holding huge lit candles marched out in single file, with an occasional priest carrying silver crosses and other emblems.

The canopy bearing a fine image of Christ passed out of the doors in silence, but when the Virgin appeared—a wooden figure of great beauty, crowned with real jewels, and dressed in Court clothes, her train of velvet and gold covering the whole of the platform upon which she stood—the cortège stopped, and little boys sang loud unaccompanied chants of a Moorish kind with passionate fervour.

This brought the procession to a close, and the crowd in the square broke up in every direction, some to follow, and others to run down the narrow side streets to see it pass again.

We followed for some time, halting with the canopies under balconies from which young men of fervour sang hymns of praise in ringing voices. This unpremeditated singing was taken up at intervals all along the route, and little boys were lifted by men on the pavement, and held up to sing as the brilliantly lit canopy of the Virgin passed.

At four o'clock in the morning, on our way home, we sat down on tin chairs at a crowded open-air restaurant and ordered drinks.

We were all tired, and, as often happens, our conversation turned upon matters quite unconnected with anything we had seen. We discussed death, and the ethics of suicide.

Arthur Rubinstein—whose powers of narration are only equalled by his playing—told us about a Polish count—his compatriot and neighbour—and sipping peppermint and aniseed, we listened.

“ Count X was a man of ancient lineage, compelling charm, autocratic temper, and great personal beauty.

“ He owned palaces and properties in Poland, Paris, and Austria, in which there were carpets, tapestries, and pictures of enormous value.

“ In his youth he had studied anatomy—the famous surgeons of the day allowing him to watch dangerous operations in the hospitals. He was a great gambler, and it was rumoured that in spite of his vast fortune his only son might inherit but little.

“ Fatiguing successes with women made him take to big game shooting, and he became a crack shot.

“ On his return from one of these expeditions, he was sitting in the club at Warsaw when he was reminded by a wealthy neighbour that he owed him a thousand pounds. Not perceiving that he was a little tipsy, the Count, exasperated beyond all words, suggested they should cut at the gaming-table, and if he drew a black card and his neighbour a red, he would pay him ten times that sum, but if the neighbour cut black he would pay him nothing.

“ After agreeing, they sat down to the table, and the Count cut the ace of clubs, whilst his neighbour drew a red card. It was rumoured that the Count had in like fashion gambled away some of his villages and all his jewels ; but be that as it may, when he was approaching the age of sixty he found himself without fortune, and too proud to borrow from his son to whom in a moment of caution he had made over some of his estates.

“ He sold his yacht and his orchestra, dismissed his attendants, and after much reflection determined to kill himself.

“ One day he left the castle of his birthplace in the small hours of the morning, and arrived at a hostel in a village where he was unknown. After remaining in bed the whole day, he sent for the parish priest, saying he was dying, and asked him to administer to him the last Communion.

“ The priest—an old, unshaved man of extreme simplicity—arrived in due course, and approached the bed where the Count was lying watching the moon through an open window. A single candle lit his beautiful face, and he looked with a penetrating eye upon his visitor.

“ ‘ If a man confesses he is going to kill himself,’ he said, ‘ can he receive absolution ? ’

“ ‘ Ah, no, sir ! ’ answered the priest. ‘ Have you forgotten your early teaching that you should put me such a question ? ’

“ He started a long quotation from the Catechism, which the Count interrupted with irritability.

“ ‘ But we are also taught that Jesus died to save sinners ; He made no conditions. How is it, then, that one must repent before being forgiven ? ’

“ ‘ That is so, my son,’ answered the old man. ‘ But forgiveness is outside the province of priests, and lies in the power of the risen Christ.’

“ At this the Count leaned back and closed his eyes. The priest did not move.

“ After a long silence he opened them, and handing his watch to the priest, said :

“ ‘ I am exhausted from my journey. Take this, will you, and walk in the woods—returning to me in half an hour.’

“ When he had gone a sufficient distance, the count sat up, drew a revolver from under the pillow, and remembering all he had learnt of anatomy, shot himself in just such a manner and place as enabled him to live until the priest’s return.

“ He died speechless, and in agony, having received the last Sacrament of his Church.”

When Rubinstein had finished his story, and our glasses were empty, we sat in silence watching M. Lafita, a Spanish artist of our party, having his boots blacked, then got up and walked home.

It was past five when I retired to bed, but the others motored on to a village on a hill to watch a primitive country procession timed to take place at dawn. They returned at eight o’clock on the morning of Good Friday.

The morning after we had watched the Easter processions at Seville, I found bouquets from the mayor (with his card), and cards of other officials who had been kind to us during the ceremony.

On Saturday, March 31st, I took my maid to see the cathedral, and went to some of the big Seville shops with the pretty wife of the Duke of Alba’s agent. I bought toys and hats for my grand-baby Priscilla and the little Bonham-Carters, a parasol for Elizabeth, a saint for my son, and castagnettes for myself. At our lunch party, every one was making arrangements for the bull-fight next day—Easter Sunday—and persuading me to go to it.

“ It will probably be bad, as the bulls are not the best, and the toreadors and matadors inexperienced; but it is a great sight, and before going home to England you should really see Spain’s national sport.”

I said I would rather die, as all forms of cruelty made me furious ; and to see blindfolded horses disembowelled, and explosives placed under the skin of the bulls, was not a form of sport I could take sitting down ; no amount of beautiful women, flowers, fans, or mantillas could console me for the horror of seeing people enjoy such savage cruelty.

“ My dear Mrs. Asquith, all sport is cruel. What about your fox-hunting ? And comfortable gentlemen drinking champagne off camp-stools, killing rabbits and pheasants—animals that neither bark, toss nor bite.”

“ It’s true,” I answered. “ But there is health in fox-hunting, and even shooting tires idle men, which ensures a certain morality. Most people would say the average Englishman has a sense of fair play which cricket and football alone would not give him. A good many qualities are brought out in riding straight across a big country, and a fox always has a fair chance of escape.”

I was outnumbered, as all the women of our party had made up their minds. We changed the subject, and the artist M. Lafita invited me to go with him to see the bulls brought in from the field that night—after the theatre—which I accepted.

In the evening we went to one of the less fashionable music-halls, crowded with men of rather a low type, and when we arrived two tall women wearing brilliant flowered shawls and men’s black hats were dancing with castagnettes. We sat in the balcony, and I lit a cigarette. A clamour arose in the audience below, and I thought it was for Rubinstein, who is a favourite and easily recognised, but he thought it was

because in Spain women do not smoke, so I instantly extinguished my cigarette and, taking no notice of the audience—who were all seated drinking and smoking—I concentrated my attention upon the stage. After listening to some rather moderate singing, M. Lafita and I motored three miles into the country at a break-neck pace in an open motor.

Climbing up wooden stairs on to a circular white platform, we saw in the field below a lot of black bulls dotted between large red and white animals with huge bells round their necks. It was a brilliant moonlight night, and we watched the “personnel” of the bull-ring standing close to us dressed in boleros, tight black trousers turned up over white socks, and black tie shoes, with large black hats, leaning over the railing of the platform giving orders to the men in the field, who were driving the herd into complicated corridors separated by iron doors leading to the vans into which the bulls were to be enticed.

Lafita informed me that the bulls were born in fields with “*les bœufs gardiens, ces grands animaux rouges et blancs que vous voyez*,” who looked after them like nurses.

“No one,” he added, “can influence a bull, who is a wild and obstinate animal, but the ‘*bœuf*’ can control them, and each bull will follow the bell that is round the neck of his nurse. He gets to know the sound of the different bells, and you will observe that wherever his nurse goes he will follow.”

Boys with stones, shouting strange sounds, drove the herd into the narrow pens, and as the bull was the last to go in, the door was dropped by the men above, and when the “*bœufs*” had passed, the bull found



himself caught and alone. Another doorway leading into the van, which was brilliantly lit, was the next object to which the bull had to be attracted. Missing his nurse, the wretched animal wandered round the pen, prodded from above towards the open doorway. We saw seven bulls driven into the vans. Some were angry, and trotted, snorting round the walls, avoiding the lighted doorway—impervious to the proddings others walked quietly into the vans, the iron doors closing like a trap behind them. In the meantime, the deserted nurses passed through the dark corridors and pens back to the field, with their bells ringing disconsolately. The outline of the men with high poles on the white platform, shouting orders against the moonlight, was like a Sargent picture. We motored into the town, and joined our party at the music-hall.

Arthur Rubinstein had invited two gipsy women and a famous guitarist to play to us in a café outside Seville, and we found him in a great state of agitation as they had answered they could only arrive late. It was two o'clock in the morning when we reached the café.

We all sat round a table in an icy summerhouse, drinking hot coffee, and awaiting the singers. At half-past two, as no one had arrived, I got up and said I would go home, as I was tired, but while Rubinstein was imploring me to stay the performers arrived.

We welcomed them with open arms, and after their glasses were filled they joined us at the table.

The guitarist was a young genius of chiselled features, deep-set eyes, and pale complexion. The

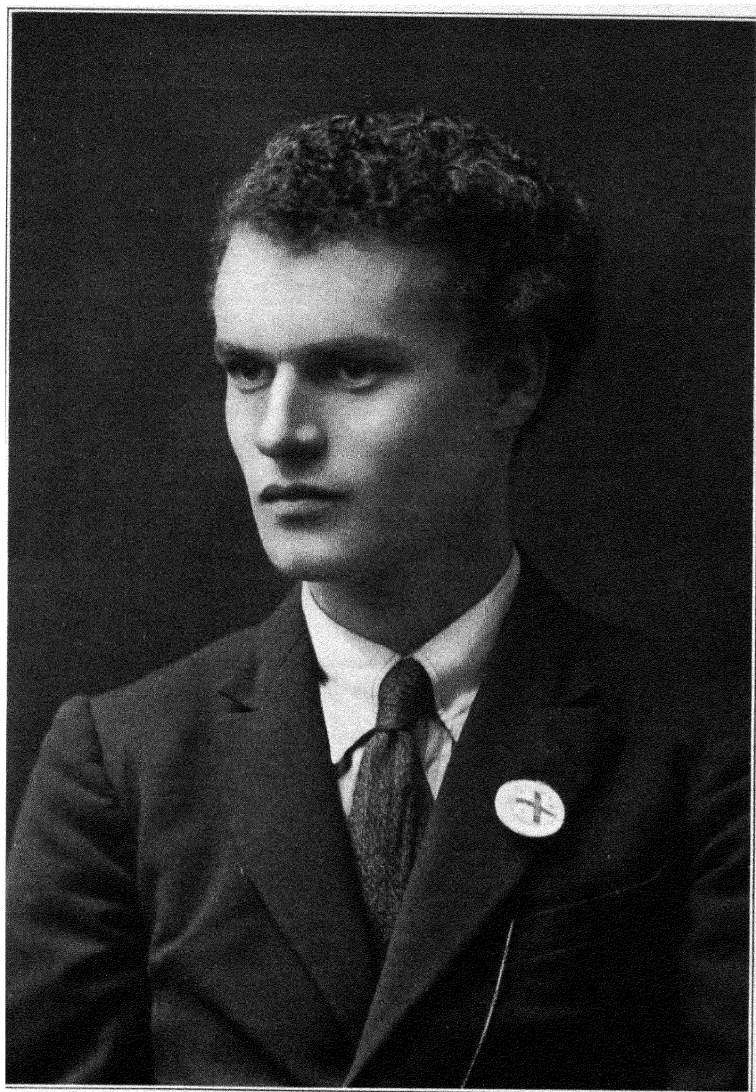
women were sisters—between the ages of thirty-five and forty—and all were dressed in ordinary clothes, black skirts and shirts, with black woollen shawls round their shoulders, and the man in grey.

I could not help thinking how different this entertainment would have been had it taken place in Italy. There, the population have been spoilt by money; they cater to the taste of the tourist, and increase a precarious income by exaggerating local colour. In Spain the people permit with indifference all and sundry to join in their festivals, but on the only occasion on which I offered them money I was repelled with scorn.

We were informed that the older sister—a woman of great charm—was there to encourage and inspire her sister, who was deaf, but who had for many years sung in every café in Seville. After a solemn silence, in which we toasted the performers, the runner-up started chanting one of the strange Flamenco songs to the guitar which are impossible to describe. The Marquis de Narros—sitting next to me—asked me if the music gave me the same pleasure as it did him. Remembering the emotion that the sound of the bagpipes always awakens in me, I said I could well understand all he felt.

The older woman stopped as suddenly as she had begun and, asking for a stronger drink, filled her sister's glass. In doing this she upset some of the wine on the cloth, at which she rubbed her finger in it and touched her own forehead and Arthur Rubinstein's with a charming laugh.

The guitarist sat unmoved, gazing with his mysterious eyes on the paved floor, playing fascinating chords



ANTHONY ASQUITH



and discords with his long and beautiful fingers, and for all the notice he took of us we might have been a thousand miles away.

We sat in silence, a cold wind from a broken pane playing on the back of my neck, and I watched the faces of the company ; ultimately the younger sister, throwing back her fine head, began to sing.

Anthony, with his chin in his hands, was devouring every cadence ; the waiter remained at the door ; De Narros was in an ecstasy, and Rubinstein spell-bound ; the rest of the party were enjoying themselves more conscientiously.

At four o'clock a.m. I told De Narros I must go, and in spite of protestations I kissed the two women, congratulated the guitarist, and was accompanied home by De Narros.

On the afternoon of Easter Sunday I was sent for by Princess Beatrice, who was staying at our hotel. She asked me if there was any chance of her hearing Rubinstein play, as he was such a friend of her daughters, and she had been unable to go to his concerts.

I said I did not know, but that in the event of our finding a piano, would she permit my companions to be of the audience, as I did not like to desert them on my last day ? She was very gracious, and gave a willing permission. Lafita—who is a king of guides in all Sevillian matters—found a piano in a shop, and Rubinstein agreed to play the next day at seven-thirty p.m.

At dinner that night, I could see that the person who had been most affected by the bull-fight had been Mlle. d'Erlanger—which endeared her to me very

much. The hardier ladies suggested that it might have been because it was pouring with rain, and umbrellas were a poor substitute for mantillas, that had the bulls been wilder, and the general gaiety and colour more brilliant, minor matters such as the disembowelling of horses, etc., would not have engaged her attention. I preferred to think otherwise.

Towards midnight we went to hear "Dora," a famous music-hall singer and dancer. This lovely being of twenty appeared in a long pale bodice and a full gold skirt over which black lace was caught by an enormous rose; she changed this to a clinging lilac *crêpe-de-Chine* with heavy fringes, and a broad-brimmed, man's grey hat; after which she changed several times without the curtain falling—singing, dancing, and talking in an enchanting manner without any of the shawls, mantillas, high combs, or stage properties that make Spanish dancing so tiresome.

Her face was not made up, and she carried her little head with challenging dignity, moving about the stage with a swiftness and swagger entirely free from any sort of vulgarity.

We were all wild with enthusiasm, and no doubt if Dora had made her début in any country but Spain she would have had a career as assured as Pavlova's; but as it is I am informed that she will be surrounded by relations who will distribute her gainings while making her a small allowance, and instead of singing to kings, or supping with millionaires, she will be old and finished in fifteen years—eating oranges off the same deal chair that her

grandmother sat on before her. Rubinstein told us that if he were to offer her the most innocent outing, he would be stilettoed or imprisoned.

Through the good offices of Lafita, we were introduced to Dora the next evening at a restaurant. I was amazed to see a little woman, smaller than myself, modestly dressed with a black hat pulled down over her eyes, and a look of hesitancy, almost sadness, in her face. I asked her to have coffee with us, but she pointed to her relations and refused, saying she must sit with them.

On Easter Monday—our last day in Seville—the weather broke, and a pitiless rain was falling.

Lafita—whose kindness and efficiency made all the difference to us in Seville—took me to a church to show me a carved wooden Christ of astonishing beauty. The crucifix was on the floor—not having been replaced since the procession—and beggar boys, holding bits of candles, squatted round to enable us to see, as Spanish churches are dark. Instead of the effeminate white face and thin body usually seen in Christ on the Cross, the sculptor has given Him the figure of a Greek athlete, with features of a handsome, sunburnt young Jew, and an expression of tenderness and power in His face which could not be found out of Spain.

We walked back into the sun and went to the studio, where he presented me with several of his sketches. Like many other artists, his impressions are better than his finished pictures, but he has talent. We all joined at the Hotel Madrid, and accompanied Princess Beatrice to the music shop in the evening.

Rubinstein opened on a woolly grand piano with Chopin's *Barcarole*, and continued with several Mazurkas, a Polonaise, and—at my request—Bach's *Toccata in D*. He ended with the *Albaian* by Albeniz. He could not have played better had we been an audience of two thousand instead of twelve people.



## CHAPTER III

### GRANADA

*The Alhambra—The Palace of Generalife—Manuel Falla and his new opera—Return to Madrid—Farewell to Spain.*

We left Seville at ten on the 3rd of April, and after a slow journey in the express train reached Granada at nine-thirty on the same evening.

We motored from the station to Carmen de Los Fosos, Generalife, where our hosts—Mr. and Mrs. Charles Temple—live in an enchanting house on a level with the Alhambra, built by themselves in the Andalusian style of fireproof rose brick, wooden beams, and open fireplaces.

Hedges of aloes and olives interspersed by clumps of Chinese-looking cactus, patches of purple pansies, and flowering wistaria, surround the house, from which you look at a view finer than any in Florence or Edinburgh. Oscar Wilde once said to me he considered fine views were made for bad artists, so I shall not describe it; but I cannot believe there is anything more beautiful in any country in the world than the view from Carmen de Los Fosos.

On the morning of the 4th, Mrs. Temple motored us to the old shops in the town. Antiquity shops are

the same mixture of good and bad whether in London, Athens, Rome, or Spain, and I have no patience with the people who complain of being swindled. To be cheated by a dealer is a matter for the Law Courts, but to cheat him yourself is a matter of congratulation ; it is only fair to allow a shopman the same sensation of gratified vanity that you feel yourself when you have picked up something of value at a low price.

The drive from the town to Los Fosos is up a steep hill between old walls with stone seats, a double avenue of magnificent trees, and through the Puerta de las Granadas.

After driving all over Granada, I understood why our hosts preferred hiring a Ford car to possessing one of their own. The streets have holes as big as tombs, and even when the cobbled surface looks smooth, you are tossed into the air as if you were a top in the game of diablo.

In the afternoon we went to the Alhambra, where we were introduced to J. Flores, the official interpreter, who sits in the first Royal Court for the instruction of the more distinguished tourists.

We found him a man of wit and knowledge. After explaining to us that the reason why the astonishing detail of this Moorish monument had resisted centuries of storm and rain was because it was built of a composition of ground marble, sand, and stucco, he pointed to the lacework of arches, pillars, gateways, and galleries, and said :

“ The touch of feminine, madam, in the architecture, is what you must realise if you are to appreciate what you will see in the Alhambra, just as the influence of monks is to be felt in the Escorial.”

We wandered from court to court, and beauty to beauty, joined by the Arquitecto Conservador de la Alhambra, till we reached the highest gallery. Looking down at the beautiful roofs of the scattered town, over the sunlit plains sentinelled by cypresses to the hyacinth hills, and tired with praising, for want of something better to say, I turned to the Arquitecto and said :

“ If ever I commit suicide, it will be from this balustrade.” To which he replied :

“ You may be quite sure, madam, your idea would have been anticipated if such a combination of beauty in landscape and architecture, dating from the thirteenth century, had not inspired *Hope*.”

The great Spanish composer—Manuel Falla,—lunched with us next day, and remained for some time afterwards talking about music. I observed a certain restlessness in our hosts as the hour of four approached. Mr. Temple, turning to his wife, asked what her afternoon plans were, and after engaging ourselves to tea with him the next day we said good-bye.

In the evening, Fernando de los Rios Urruti, a professor of political economy, dined. He is a man of striking personality, charm, and knowledge, as well as a politician of advanced Liberal views. He said what had given the Coalition their *coup de grâce* had doubtless been their call to the Colonies to join the Greeks in fighting the Turk (an act of unparalleled folly). Having just returned from Berlin, he was in a position to tell us of the industrial, moral, and physical sufferings of the German people. He said the action of France was isolating her from the

moral approbation of the whole world—that moral force which had lined up to help her to win the war. That only the ruin of Germany would make the French know what their action had cost them.

“When the public realize that a ruined Germany will pay nothing, then Poincaré will fall execrated by the whole of France.”

I said, with the exception of a small group, Poincaré had French opinion behind him. (We were both speaking questionable French.)

“Plutôt, madame, je dirais la silence,” he answered.

On the sixth, we spent the morning at the old Palace of Generalife, which is free from the restorations of the Alhambra and of almost greater interest.

The paved courtyards of orange trees in full fruit, magnolias of forest height, budding bushes of yellow banksia, and single jets of water flung high into the air at measured intervals along the closely-cut box hedges, add to the beauty of the open galleries, tiled roofs, and decorated walls of a lovely old building. What was striking both at the Alhambra and Generalife was the absence of guides and tourists. We only saw a few people scattered about, and heard no talking ; this convinces me that Spain is less visited than any other European country of equal beauty.

At five o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Temple, my son and I went to Falla's house for tea. The detachment and unpunctuality of the Spanish people pass all understanding. We sat waiting in a charming room with a plaited straw dado, a cottage piano—on which were heaped music and manuscripts, photographs of Goossens, Rubinstein, and the picture by Zuloaga

of an American lady that I have got in my drawing-room.

Falla is a man of beautiful countenance and great sensibility. He talks well in a difficult French, and has purpose, fire and conviction.

He said that up to now no music at all had been written, and when I suggested Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, or perhaps Wagner ; he exclaimed :

“ Ce n'est que des annonces, madame.”

Coming from anyone else, this remark would have sounded absurd, but he followed it up with an earnest, wonderful discourse of what he meant by the word “ music.”

Remaining unconvinced, I found myself longing for the piano to be opened or the tea to be announced, but Mr. Temple showed such admirable fortitude that I dared not fidget.

When the town clocks chimed six, Mlle. Falla informed us that tea was ready, and we went downstairs. The conversation turned on to his friend Professor Fernando, and when I said he was a man I would like to see more of, the door opened and he walked in.

Tea being over, I conducted Falla to the piano.

He told us he had no voice, and had never permitted himself to practise, but that he would go through “ El Retablo de Maese Pedro ” (his new one-act opera), relying on our tolerance. Before beginning, he explained the story. There were three singers: Master Peter (tenor), the showman; the Boy (mezzo soprano) who stands outside the puppet show ; and Don Quixote (baritone). He continued :

“ The first scene opens in front of a country inn, where Don Kichoté (as he pronounced it) and Sancho

are sitting surrounded by drinking villagers. The Boy (a choir boy) is standing outside a curtained puppet show, shouting in loud tones 'Walk up! Walk up to see the show!' He is gesticulating with a wand between his explanations, and encouraging the audience by exalted promises of the perfections they are about to witness. When the loiterers are assembled, Maese Pedro—the owner of the show—pulls back the curtains from inside, and the marionettes are seen representing the Court of Charlemagne. Fine gentlemen are sitting at the gambling table throwing dice, accompanied by languid ladies in trains of brocade covered with jewels, and there is a general air of festivity and display.

"Charlemagne upbraids Señor Don Gayferos for indulging in pleasure while his wife—Melisendra—is lying imprisoned by the Moors in a fortress in the city of Saragossa; and after some discussion the curtain falls.

"When the curtains are drawn for the second scene, Don Gayferos is seen riding through rocky passes towards the fortress of Saragossa to deliver his imprisoned wife, Melisendra, in which he succeeds. In a moment of passion an indiscreet Moor seems to have embraced the lady, which aroused the 'pudeur' and fury of the Sultan. The delinquent was assailed by sticks and stones, and flogged through the streets of the city, and marching orders given to the army to pursue the Christian lovers."

Our host ended his story thus :

"At this moment, Don Quixote stands up gesticulating like a windmill with his arms—to the surprise of the spectators—and shouts in the text of Cervantes :

“‘I will never consent, while I live, that in my presence such an outrage as this be offered to so valiant and to so amorous a bold knight as Don Gayferos !’

“He proceeds to unsheath his sword, and rains strokes right and left on the marionettes. In vain Maesè Pedro begs him with tears not to take the piece too seriously, since the performers are only puppets and mean no harm ; the exalted gentleman gets bolder and more excited, and cuts and thrusts till every marionette is broken, and the puppet show lies in fragments at his feet.”

After this preliminary account, Falla sat down and, with a few gaps, went through the chief parts of his wonderful composition, singing, reciting, gesticulating, and playing with a grace, power, and conviction so moving that when I thanked him my voice shook. He was also trembling with emotion when he said good-bye to us ; and as Anthony, our hosts, and I walked out into the sunset towards the motor, we agreed we had listened to the work of a great genius.

I asked Professor Fernando if he imagined Mlle. Falla—who sat with a settled expression on her face throughout the performance—had really understood it. He answered :

“Il y a deux façons de comprendre les choses, madame, l’un par le coeur et l’autre par la conscience.”

“On pourrait même ajouter une troisième—la cervelle,” I said, to which he agreed, but explained to us that Mlle. Falla had so great a devotion to her brother that there was nothing connected with him that she could not apprehend.

We spent the morning of the 7th accompanied by

the professor in the oldest parts of Granada, ending by the Cathedral and the Royal Chapel. We sat down on stone seats and examined the beautiful gateways of Justice, the Pilar de Carlos Quinto, and the medallions by Diego de Silos. It was cold, and a light snow began to fall when we returned home.

On Sunday, April the 8th, our last day in Granada, it snowed without ceasing, and after writing my diary I read the belated English papers. The defeated Nationalists seemed to be still forcing the pace over Liberal Reunion. (It is unwise to pull up even the strongest plant, and rejected addresses are apt to become ridiculous.) Turning to what was newer, I read with surprise that I had told a journalist in Madrid that my husband "would in two years resume office at the head of a more united and more numerous Liberal Party than ever."

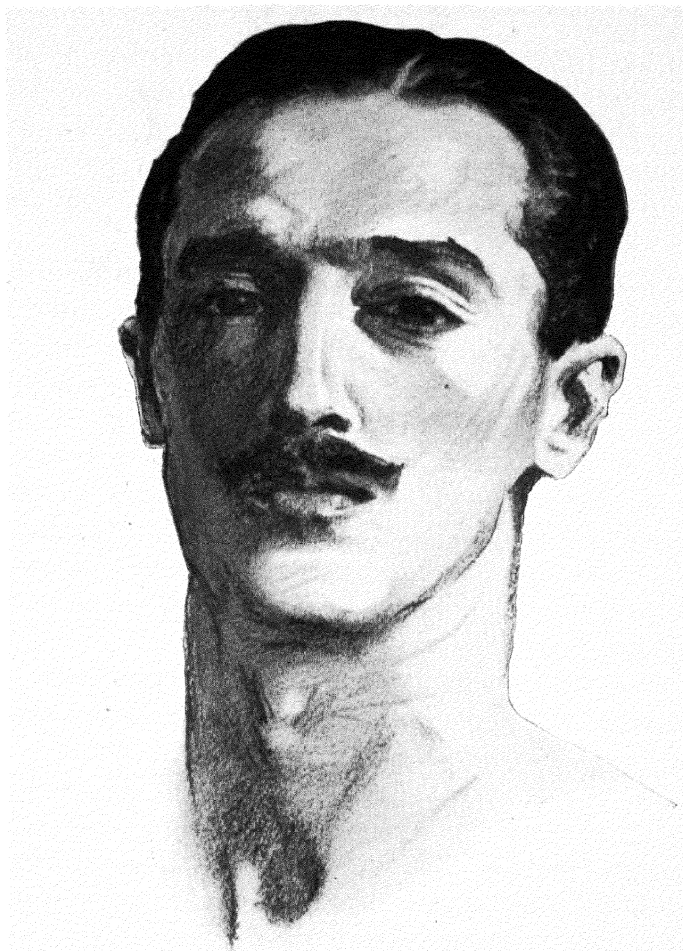
This touching confidence did not come from me, but I have said too many foolish things in the course of my life to resent impromptus.

We arrived in Madrid on the night of the 9th, and had a late dinner in the company of our hosts, the Duke of Alba and his wife—beautiful specimens of Spanish aristocracy alike in face, figure, and manners.

We had a long talk on general politics.

In answer to some of his remarks upon his fellow-countrymen, I said that nothing but education could create public opinion in Spain, the lack of which he deplored. Many of the Spanish people could neither read nor write, and little children of five or six supped at midnight with mothers rich enough to wear diamond earrings; this—combined with laziness—was not promising for their national future. I told him





*Simon*  
1923. *John L.argent 1913*

THE DUKE OF ALBA Y BERWICK



about a Scottish peer of whom it was related in my youth that, though a strong Tory, he was heard at the club expressing advanced Liberal opinions.

“Hullo, old man!” said a friend, “what has happened to you? The views you have just expressed are very different from what you were saying to us a few months ago.”

To which his distinguished friend replied :

“Not at all, my dear fellow! I am all for the people—damn ’em!—but I wouldn’t educate ’em—blast ’em!”

The next day we went over the Armoury, which, though a trifle crowded, is marvellously arranged. The beauty of gold and silver design on shields, helmets, swords, and trappings; the saddles, stirrups, spurs, and guns—represented from the earliest days of chivalry, ceremony, and battle—add to the historical interest, and leave a lasting impression. I do not imagine that in the whole of Europe one can see anything at all comparable to it.

Early on the morning of the 11th of April 1923, we took a train from Madrid to Paris, and I have seldom left a country with greater feelings of regret than when I looked across the olive groves and saw our last Castle in Spain.



MY VISIT TO  
ITALY IN 1924



# MY VISIT TO ITALY IN 1924

## CHAPTER I

### FROM HOME POLITICS TO ROME

*Politics of to-day—Winston Churchill—His Failure at the Westminster Election—Journey to Paris with Anthony—Jeanne Granier—Rapallo.*

I am not writing for any particular reader, or upon any particular subject ; nor have I the presumption to imagine anyone would be interested in my opinions if I were ; but I am writing for my own pleasure, and am going to give a short account of things in general and of my holiday with my son.

The changes that have taken place in these islands in less than six months are so colossal that they must have bewildered the foreigner as much as they have stunned and stimulated all thoughtful people at home.

When the Labour Government under the leadership of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald was installed in Whitehall, it would have been hard to say who were the most frightened—the Peers, the Press, the Tories, the City, or the Cabinet. Nor can I exempt a certain sort of Liberal—either in the House of Commons or the constituencies—but though I do not think the bulk of our men shared this terror, undoubtedly every

political Party was taken by surprise. It was difficult to imagine that in matters of foreign policy, delicate questions of Defence, Finance, and Administration, men of little experience and foolish talk would be able to govern the British Empire.

Since the Armistice, a great swing to the Left has been as noticeable as it has been inevitable in every country. When men and women have been ostracizing their friends they are not likely to be in the humour to forgive their enemies, and the vain and foolish talk was not confined to the Labour Party. One of the cleverest men in England said in a prepared address delivered to an academic audience: "Politically, economically, and philosophically, the motive of self-interest not only is but must be—and ought to be—the mainspring of human conduct."

If every man of influence, every newspaper, City Corporation, Church and University all over the civilized world had dedicated themselves to peace and reconciliation, and paid more than lip-service to the League of Nations, the habit and spirit of War—engendered by hate, greed and swagger—might have been fundamentally altered. The only practical way of doing this would have been to lift the blockade in 1918 and by an exchange of commodities get into quick touch with friend as well as enemy. Mutual benefit is more reliable than mutual forgiveness, and this faith is what differentiates Liberals from Tories and is at the bottom of their belief in Free Trade.

In the early autumn of 1923, there was no reason to suppose that the Tory Government would not remain in office for several years—though Napoleon himself never had a harder task than the late Prime





THE EARL OF OXFORD AND ASQUITH



Minister when he started to straighten out the muddles of his predecessors.

In a moment of impatience—and possibly influenced by the abysmal ignorance of his Front Bench—Mr. Baldwin plunged the country into a General Election on the issue of Protection, and the British public—tired of seeing politics treated by the “first-class brains” as a game—split the Tories from top to toe, and returned Labour as the second biggest Party in the House of Commons.

My husband—over whose decease every bell had tolled—suddenly found himself proclaimed the saviour of Society. Threatened, flattered, entreated and cajoled, in private letters, public postcards, and by anxious ex-Ministers, he kept an even keel.

He was laid low with influenza at the time, and by doctor's orders not allowed to see anyone.

Mr. Churchill, Lord Birkenhead, Sir Robert Horne, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Lord Midleton and many business and City men, told us publicly and privately that they were prepared to follow his leadership, anything rather than have a Labour Government. The Conservatives had been rejected by the country, which made it impossible for the King to call upon them, Labour was in a minority, and the Liberals, being the only untried Party, would be compelled by circumstances to form a Government. I pointed out that we also were in a minority, and that the rank and file of the Conservatives would not follow my husband, nor would that particular group in the House of Commons (chiefly Coalitionists) command any majority of their own Party. They maintained that the hideous danger of a Labour

Government was so great that for the sake of King and Country everyone would make sacrifices.

The Tory Party have never objected to borrowing their Leaders from the Liberals, but to make an illicit arrangement, whether called "Fusion," "Coalition" or any other name to cheat Labour, would have been against all that is honourable in public life. To go to Mr. Baldwin and say we would become Protectionists and keep him in office, or for the Tories to come to us and say they would become Free Traders to follow my husband, would have made both the historic Parties in this country treacherous and grotesque. Rage made rumours fly round of plots and intrigues which never existed, and to this day there are men and women of intelligence who think my husband did the wrong thing in putting a Labour Government into office. It is abundantly clear that had he been foolish enough to take the advice of the "first-class brains," Labour would have had a legitimate grievance and in any future election must have swept this country.

Fear is of all things the least productive.

It would be easy to dilate upon the mistakes made by each of the old historic Parties in neglecting to take Labour into its councils during the last twenty-four years ; but it must be said in defence of the Liberals, that they have not only done more for Labour than any other party, but that during their term of office they went from crisis to crisis trying to persuade the Tories to do many of the things that they have been obliged to do since ; and but for the War, Liberals would have placed upon the Statute Book additional records of industrial reform. It is also certain that

they would never have countenanced a Peace which is directly responsible for half the unemployment and most of the misery which is haunting the world to-day.

I do not know enough history to say, but I should think the only possibility of a lasting truce after the terrors and futilities of war consists in terms of peace that are generous.

The 1918 Election, with its war-whoops, balloons, and battle-cries, was a great political blunder. It killed the *officier de liaison* between extreme Right and extreme Left, and our Party was rent by internal divisions. Mr. Baldwin's sudden conversion to Protection—after his rather cynical and lightheaded conduct of the Safeguarding of Industries Bill—did not give us enough time to organize our reunion, and our men were seriously handicapped in the last General Election. (But we won many astonishing victories, and you can go from Land's End to Oxford without setting foot on a Labour or Tory constituency).

I cannot remember the time when there were not three Parties in the House of Commons (most countries have more), but with courage and patience we hope to avoid the folly and danger of seeing all the rich pitted against the poor.

Patience is the rarest of political gifts, and there are moments in life—as in politics—when we must endeavour to look beyond ourselves :

“ With malice toward none ; with charity for all ; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are engaged in ; to bind up the nations' wounds, to care for him

who shall have borne the battle, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

. . . . .

The fatigues and excitements of the General Election prevented Christmas 1923 from being in any true sense of the word a holiday, and I had been looking forward to my annual expedition abroad with my son with increasing and unfeigned delight.

It is difficult to choose the right place to go to when the sun is high and the winds are cold, but after protracted discussions we decided to divide our four weeks between Paris and Rome.

I often envy the man who, when asked by a friend how he had left his wife, replied: "Very easily."

I never leave anything easily, and my footsteps are dogged throughout life by a kind of affectionate tenacity. I like what I am accustomed to: I love my relations, forgive my friends, am indifferent to my enemies, and envy nobody. My tenacity is unintentional. I am not gracelessly obstinate or mulishly perverse, but I am embarrassingly faithful. I would like to go to China, India, and the Trossachs some day, but in the meantime prefer England. I am, above all, a bad traveller. I am good with strangers, bad with passports, sleepless in a train, and the sight of the sea reminds me of convalescence.

The last ten days before we left London had been exhausting. Winding up the winter, rearranging books, settling household affairs, transferring things from the country to the town, and, above all, a sudden

and dangerous attack of influenza which my husband had contracted, increased my anxieties. Never at any time very patient, I had a thousand things to do, both important and unimportant, added to which, living as I do in the wilds of Bedford Square, my daily progress was retarded by a by-election which was taking place in the Abbey division of Westminster.

The London traffic, haunted by horse-drawn drivers asleep in the middle of the road, is never very flexible, but it was rendered stationary and my motor superfluous by this famous political upheaval.

Forced to find myself upon my feet, I meandered about among well-marshalled canvassers, hoping to pick up a little information upon which to form some opinion as to the chances of the two candidates about whom everyone was talking or betting.

With the exception of the *Times* and the *Morning Post*, our minor Press prophets were backing and boosting Mr. Winston Churchill.

I love political contests almost as much as Americans love platitudes, the Scots love sermons, and the French love force; but I should have been more excited had the principal combatants not been fighting for the same cause—if you can call anything prefixed by the word “anti” a cause.

Pushed to its logical conclusion and shorn of rhetoric, the contention with which Mr. Churchill was trying to make the flesh of his audiences creep ran thus :

“ Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and his Cabinet have as yet neither plundered our pockets nor murdered our parents, but I know them better than they know themselves, and they *will*.”

Individually, the Members of Parliament on the Government Benches while not quite understanding the forms of procedure, were good-humoured, sensible men ; but collectively, whether from force of circumstance or lack of ideas, they appeared rather shapeless, and their policy was difficult for the most unprejudiced to follow. A Labour Government whose sole contribution to the pressing problem of unemployment was the remark that they did not keep rabbits in their hats was probably less to be feared than Mr. Churchill.

Leaving these reflections, I threaded my way to platforms erected upon barrows and trollies, and listened to the various speakers and the comments of the crowd.

The Union Jack—a new device in political colours—stirred my feelings rather vaguely, but whether from the icy wind or what not, there appeared to me to be a good deal of forced animation among the rosetted rhetoricians.

You could have heard a pin drop when Mr. Scott Ducker's name was mentioned, nor did shouts for Mr. Otho Nicholson cause much perturbation, but not so when the Union Jackites began to flutter their emblems. Heroes at the back—who started singing "Rule Britannia" or the "Red Flag"—were put to shame by a claque of cheers for "Winnie," till it became clear to the dullest that he was THE MAN.

On March 20th, 1924, my son and I went to hear the poll declared—outside a hideous building where a crowd had collected.

Accustomed to the enthusiasm and intelligence of a Paisley political crowd—where your life is in almost equal danger from your friend as your enemy—I



thought the gathering outside the Caxton Hall too orderly for the excessive chaperonage of the police.

Challenged by a few West End ladies, who had joined me in the street, as to what I guessed the result would be, I said :

“ I think Winston will be beaten by fifteen or twenty.” (It was just the sort of lucky shot any idiot might have made after fluctuating for days between contradictory opinions ; but I never thought he could win.)

After waiting for over an hour, protected from the wind by the mounted police, I saw an excited Tory female waving a bunch of blue ribbons from the steps of the hall, and knew that the Tories had won. As there was no balcony, and the proudest victor would not have risked his life speaking from the roof of a conservatory which covered the porch facing the street, I threaded my way back to the motor and returned to our Square.

Mr. Churchill has not even a nodding acquaintance with time ; he is what he always has been—a very young man of genius, whose friendship is more valuable than his advice. No one has ever published, or ever will publish, an arresting study of his mind or character, though the least discerning could write an interesting account of his career. He is a great expressionist, a fine writer, and a loyal private friend. He is a brave sailor, but no one can be a good navigator if his telescope is focused upon a single star.

Everyone was agreed that he had put up a remarkably plucky fight, while regretting he had not reserved his big guns for a more conspicuous enemy. Promising to support the Tories while advocating a strong Liberal

wing to unite the two Parties in the future aroused no enthusiasm, and the bravest soldier cannot be expected to fight upon two fronts.

It takes no witch to apprehend that at the back of Mr. Churchill's mind lies the damning delusion that he can form a Centre Party. It accounts for the wrong entry of what the newspapers would call most of Mr. Lloyd George's "erstwhile supporters"; but these merry-go-rounds do not appeal to the British electorate.

During my political lifetime many young men of scant faith in causes and no political insight have seen themselves in the middle of this Circle. But Messrs. Birkenhead, Churchill & Co. either never knew, or have completely forgotten the joy and relief with which the news of the fall of their Coalition—at the Carlton Club meeting—was received by men of every opinion all the world over. It irritates and baffles them to think the Liberal Party is so out of date as still to believe that principles are more important than place; that the Press has little power; that conscienceless compromise is against the best traditions of our Parliamentary system, and many who hold their views cannot forgive my husband for not having formed another Coalition—the only means by which a Labour Government could have been kept out of office.

I have often noticed that the men who talk of being bigger than Party, and prate about Patriotism, are without conviction, and only thinking of themselves.

Liberalism is a kind of religion. It is instinct with a sense of fair play, which is the bed-rock of the power of the British Empire; and when the Tories become

loyal again to their chosen chief an equal Faith will return to them.

There are some "glittering prizes" not worth having, and leaders—however brilliant—are apt to become ridiculous, if not extinct, when they are sure of neither their goal nor their followers.

. . . . .

Clad as if we were going to the Caucasus, we left London on March 21st. A crowded carriage from Boulogne made it impossible for me to remove any of my under-garments, and two agreeable golfers had filled up all the space that our bags, rugs, coats, books, lunch, and newspapers had left to them.

The heat was terrific, and my legs were even more boiled when I had removed my spats ; it came up like smoke everywhere in whiffs from under the carpet. We flung ourselves upon the windows. Neither Anthony nor I are good at mechanism, and however many directions are printed in however many different languages, I am incapable of taking advantage of them.

"Défense de se pencher au dehors" appeared simple but ironical, and after tugging every strap and tearing our nails as well as bruising our chests against the glass, we collapsed.

I arrived in Paris hot and punished for my over-precaution.

We were met by my son-in-law's beautiful cousin, Princess George Bibesco, with roses in her arms. She is a woman upon whose intelligence and affection all who know her can depend, as well as being observant, witty and detached. She left us at our hotel, telling

us we were all to join shortly at dinner with Sir Philip Sassoon, who was going to take us afterwards to a theatre.

None but the most heartless would ask for tea in their room at an hour when the waiters at the Ritz Hotel are besieged by every visitor in Paris, so I chose a small table and awaited my son, while scrutinizing the cackling ladies of every nationality eating cakes under *cloche* hats as monotonous as policemen's helmets, and such of their conversation as I was reluctantly obliged to overhear.

Sir Philip Sassoon—the best of friends and companions and a rare artist—took us to an old play at the Variétés called “Le bois sacré,” a skit on l'Académie des Beaux Arts of fifteen years ago, in which Jeanne Granier acted amazingly well. I was told she was seventy, in which case she is the most vital woman living, always excepting Lady Cunard, who is several generations younger and a woman of happy heart and iron nerves.

The Marquis de Castellane took Anthony and me to see Granier in the entr'acte. We had not met since I saw her play in a private house in Mayfair to King Edward. She was delighted with our visit, and has lost nothing of her gaiety and charm.

English actresses, with few exceptions, do not listen well on the stage, and when they read letters conveying bad news make far too much to do. This is, perhaps, pardonable if there are other people on the scene, but when the heroine is alone it is unconvincing, and I am sure all superfluous movement is bad acting.

It is strange to think that though the French are the best actors in the world, they have never had the energy

to make their theatres either hygienic or comfortable, or to do away with the old vultures who plead for coats and hats, or beg you to have a footstool when your knees are jammed against the red plush backs of the seats in front of you.

We returned to our hotel dripping with heat and dropping with fatigue, and left Paris early the next morning. We spent the night in the train, retiring to hard beds and heavy horsecloths in an atmosphere where even woad would have been too much covering.

Unlucky at cards, one might have supposed I would be lucky in other ways, but whatever luck may go to other people it seldom comes my way. It does not matter at what season of the year I choose to travel, there are always queues of fleas, bugs, and flies awaiting my arrival, and when I woke up at 5.30 on the morning of the 23rd at Rapallo station, I found myself bitten from knuckle to knee. If I ate, slept, and drank as much as my friends, I would understand the poisonous lumps which rise so readily on my skimpy figure. But I seldom allow myself more than six hours' sleep, and get up from every meal before the others have refilled their glasses. It is a great drawback in life to be so poisonable, and a warning against giving way to the impatience and irritability from which I am a chronic sufferer. I must try to cultivate an enamelled complacency which, if it will not add to my friends, may placate my enemies and improve my general health. I have always rather suspected that heavy spray of affability which, like icing on a cake, prevents me from knowing whether the hidden substance is sponge, seed or sultana. But some people have selves to promote

and other selves to control, and it is obvious that I belong to the latter category and must take myself in hand, as I am not the least likely to become too agreeable, and my only chance of health is to avoid speaking and—above all—writing when I am in a state of nervous irritability. With a little more serenity, I imagine I would be as strong as a tourist and impervious to every bug-bite.

## CHAPTER II

### ROME

*The British Embassy—The Buildings of Rome—Tivoli: the Villa of Hadrian and the Villa d'Este.*

The train de luxe from Paris to Rome is not fast. Finding myself rather bored and tired, I discussed poetry with Anthony and looked over the English magazines we had brought with us.

We were delighted to find a new limerick in the *Weekly Westminster* of March 22nd, signed "Nutcracker":

"There was an old lady of Sheen,  
Whose musical ear was not keen;  
She remarked, 'It is odd  
That I cannot tell 'God  
Save the Weasel' from 'Pop goes the  
Queen.'"

We arrived in Rome on Sunday, March 23rd, at a quarter-past three in the afternoon, where we were met by our British Ambassador's motor and rapidly conveyed to the Embassy.

The British Embassy—near Porta Pia—is a large white building with a fine staircase, good reception rooms, and a lovely garden. Camelia trees in full

blossom stand at intervals round the lawn at the curve of the drive which sweeps up to the double doors of the entrance. Cinerarias of every colour are placed close together upon stone balustrades in the more formal part of the garden, and a big tennis-court surrounded by trees makes you feel far away from any city.

The reception-rooms of every Embassy I have ever seen—except ours in Paris—suffer from certain decorative conventions. I do not know whether it is due to the taste of the permanent officials in Whitehall, or the fancy of our passing Ambassadors, that grandeur seems inseparable from ugliness; but I sometimes wonder if distinguished foreigners think our Embassies abroad are true reflections of the best British taste.

There is not much to be done with large reception-rooms in any house, but in the Embassy at Rome pictures of our Royal Family are parked—to use an American expression—to an unrelieved extent. Great artists painted the Georges, and the galleries in Spain and Italy, and sculpture of ancient days, portray to the admiration of a cultured public every ruler in Europe. Our Royalties—always kind and courageous—have given more opportunities to bad artists than most kings and queens. It is a matter of surprise and regret to think that Queen Alexandra—the most beautiful and beloved woman of our time—should never have been painted by any great artist.

Apart from the reception-rooms, Sir Ronald and Lady Sybil Graham have made everything that they have touched beautiful. In the course of their travels they have collected Oriental carpets, china,



lacquer, and pictures of charm and value, and arranged them in such a manner as to make you feel the personality of people of rare taste and observation.

Upon our arrival, we were warmly greeted by our Ambassador, after which I retired to rest.

We dined at nine that night with Princess Jane Faustina, a well known lady of fine appearance and large American heart, who entertains with equal assiduity most of the interesting and uninteresting Society in several European capitals.

In spite of going to bed late, we woke up early next morning and precipitated ourselves into the wonders of Rome.

Without waiting for a Baedeker, we peeped through the dark protecting archways into sunlit courtyards and watched the fountains toss their white spray against the vellum walls of high and unnamed Palazzos.

I never realized that Rome was so closely surrounded by such lovely country. You can see long stretches of green, chains of pointed mountains, black cypresses, and little villages tucked up against the sky from wherever you stand; and there is an atmosphere of light and colour in the streets which inspires you with a sense of gaiety and keenness. If it were not for the abominable surface of the streets and roads—which gave me slight concussion of the brain—I do not think anyone would ever feel tired in Rome.

It is noticeable that no creepers are allowed to corrupt any of the fine buildings abroad, and it makes me profoundly unhappy to think that, thanks to the ignorance, obstinacy, and hopeless lack of taste and

reverence in England to-day, future generations will never see Oxford, Cambridge, Winchester, or Eton as we have known them. I do not know who the authorities are who control these matters, but they might be worth meeting if only to find out why they prefer ivy and Virginia-creeper to the stonework of our most ancient and beautiful buildings. It is evidently a passion with all teachers of the young, as I have never seen a private school that was not disfigured either by ivy or by Virginia-creeper.

The people in Rome live in intimacy with all that is beautiful and ancient. Statues, fountains, bridges, marble staircases, and courtyards of magic beauty are not guarded by men in gold hats and brass buttons, but priest, pauper, stranger, guest, and tourist can enjoy them alike; they remain just as they were, part of the life—and in no sense of the death—of the city. Ruins, however historically interesting, can be dull, and should never be cut off by turnstiles, ropes, or rude officialdom from the pleasure of the people. Nothing quickens the pulse or renews youth like admiration, and we spent an unforgettable morning.

There is something in the quality of the stone in Rome that makes it look like coarse linen of the time of Queen Elizabeth, and I must ask someone who knows whether it is age or accident that makes the brickwork—of which high walls, palaces, and every kind of house are constructed—so fine in colour. Little narrow bricks—varying from a faded yellow to a sunburnt rose—are to be seen in every street, used for every purpose, and add enormously to the beauty of the town.

The interiors of Italian churches lack the dignity and mystery of our own. You seldom see fine stained glass, and the brilliant and often tawdry decorations peculiar to Roman Catholic sentiment give a feeling of banqueting more than of prayer, and the elephantine antics with which the gigantic sugar-loaf Apostles express their adoration go far to making the interior of St. Peter's ridiculous ; but I do not think there is anything more perfect in architecture than the back of the cathedral, or more interesting and lovely than the Vatican.

It is a never-ending source of speculation to me why beautiful buildings have so little influence upon modern architects. Whether you go to Athens or Rome, Oxford or Winchester, and see the vulgar modern buildings that are constantly erected, you can only suppose that the average architect is either line-blind or beauty-proof. In justice, be it said that Herbert Baker, Walter Cave, and Sir Edwin Lutyens are men of first-rate merit ; but no one will dispute that there are specimens of modern architecture in London which we should all be glad to be rid of, including the hideous red Admiralty—with its poky rooms and roomy corridors—which has destroyed the unity of the loveliest part of London.

Men are either born with taste or acquire it, and however educated, a mixture of arrogance and complacency goes far to destroy it. Motoring through the rural districts of England since 1918 makes me wonder if taste is not one of our weakest points.

Inward memories of the War will always be tragic enough, but we do not want our reflections to be pulled up by the sight of countless country memorials which

are so ugly, heavy and meaningless that they ruin half the wooded cross-roads and most of the village greens in England. Nor can they be said to reflect the spirit of Christ—always out of fashion with the Church—as in our village the only beauty of the war-memorial is a stone seat for tired churchgoers to sit upon, and this is surrounded by high and hideous area railings.

Apropos of War memorials, I was praising the Cenotaph to a friend of mine who had been criticising it adversely :

“ Surely, my dear Maud,” I said, “ you did not want harps and angels ! A sort of Jacob’s Ladder, did you ? ”

To which she replied :

“ It would be better than a Jacob’s lift.”

. . . . .

One day, our beloved and witty Italian friend, the Marquis Visconti Venosta, motored us to Tivoli, which is about ten miles from Rome.

We took our lunch with us and stopped at the Villa of Hadrian. After a steep climb in stiff mud up the cypress avenue, we arrived at the villa. I learnt by my Baedeker that :

“ Hadrian’s biographer, Spartian, relates that the far-travelled Emperor, who died in A.D. 138, created in his villa at Tivoli a marvel of architecture and landscape gardening ; to its different parts he assigned the names of celebrated buildings and localities, such as the Lyceum, the Academy, the Prytaneum, Canopus, the Stoa Pœcile and Tempe,

while, in order that nothing should be wanting, he even constructed a representation of Tartarus."

After reading this I wanted my lunch, and we sat down among the broken marble and stone colonnades of probably the most wonderful architectural conception ever born of man. Far below were sentinels of cypresses, and I thought of Chateaubriand's phrase: "*Les cypres remplacent les colonnes tombées dans ces palais de la mort.*"

Anthony and I wandered about separately among throne-rooms, swimming-baths, porches, pavilions, niches, islands, vestibules, fountains, dining-halls, sleeping-rooms, water-basins, temples, torch-stands and arcades, till we rejoined our motor.

From the Villa of Hadrian we continued our drive. It was one of those days of mysterious shade and light that add beauty to the meanest landscape when we went to see the Villa d'Este. A portcullis of fine rain dropped across the sun, and not a leaf stirred.

On arriving in front of the villa, which stands in the street, you find nothing to warn you, and you are put off your guard by the German Arms over the door.

The Villa d'Este was built in 1549 by Pirro Ligorio, and planned and laid out for the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, who must have been a lonely man of gigantic strength and great imagination.

The interior of such as we saw of the villa did not impress me much; the Zuccheri frescoes, marble floors, and great height of the rooms gave me a feeling of caky colour and chilly emptiness; I was tired and did not look at anything very closely, but when

Visconti took us outside on to a long balcony to look down at the garden, my eyes stared and my heart stopped.

Gardens, if you observe them closely, can tell you a great deal about their proprietors. Some show profusion in flowers, some an excess of botany, some a sense of geometry, some a strain for originality, and some an eye for colour; but the garden of the Villa d'Este is an inspiration.

I looked below me at the fountains making radiant and pointed appeals to a distant sun to come and deliver them as knights might rescue sleeping maidens from what seemed to be a dark and haunted place.

Detached and tired, I wandered down the endless steps and peered at the tiers of mossgrown terraces, trying to locate the gurgling of unseen but close cascades. I found myself in a sunless tangle of tropical undergrowth, and the vindictive branches of old and twisted trees seemed to close round me forbidding me to move either forward or backward. With something of the feeling of a child in the dark, I glanced over my shoulder like a person pursued. A large toad was squatting in the path, his bulging sides throbbing and his eyes veiled like a crocodile's. I hurried on and came breathless into the sunshine. Sitting on the ledge of the first fountain, I thought of the eternal life of places like Leicester or Sheffield, and felt a wave of compassion for people doomed to live in the suburbs of most of our industrial towns, who—like children playing at make-believe games—call their villas, "Flower Gate," "Holly Den," "Elm View," "Lime Stretches," "Beach Copses," or "Primrose Nook."

I do not know how much environment is responsible for inspiration (it is possible that Byron, Shelley, or Keats might have conceived their poems as well in the jostle of streets, the climbing of coaches, the din of a tavern, as by a lake or on a hill), but I feel convinced that Wordsworth, Goethe, and the Elizabethans must at some time or other in their lives have strayed into the garden of the Villa d'Este.

## CHAPTER III

### I VISIT MUSSOLINI

*Mussolini's birth at Doria—Son of a blacksmith—His personality and dress—Conversation.*

I am not much of a sightseer, whether in men or remains, but the acknowledged success of Mussolini in Italy, his romantic beginnings and sudden fame, made me wish to know him. Our Ambassador was the only person I knew who, being in almost daily contact with him, could have arranged such a meeting ; but I did not want to press him for so great a favour.

Realizing as I did that even if I succeeded in seeing the Italian Prime Minister, our encounter would of necessity be brief, I asked every one I met to tell me all he could about him, and need hardly add that the accounts I heard were many and various.

Among other things, I was informed that his belief in himself and his power is inspired not so much by his admiration of Napoleon, as his studies in the Letters and Orations of Machiavelli. This was new, and I could not recall a single public action, from his march into Rome to his wrong entry into Corfu, to support this theory ; but in any case, is it not a little late to believe, or make any one else believe, that



“ Men never work for good except under compulsion,” or that “ Men regret more a power which is taken from them than a brother or father whom death has taken from them, because death is sometimes forgotten, but property never ”? Or, again, that : “ Friendship is a species of duty resulting from a benefit, and cannot endure against the calculation of interest ; whereas fear carries with it the dread of punishment, which never loses its influence ” ?

If half the conclusions of Machiavelli’s teaching were true, man would not merely be lowered to the level of the beasts in the field, but transformed into frozen meat packed in Chicago, and any idiot could govern him.

Nothing but the uninfluenceable vanity of perpetual youth, or a deeply-founded contempt for his fellow-countrymen, could make anyone cultivate such a precrinoline conception of himself, and by the expression of Signor Mussolini’s face—in such photographs as I have seen—there is too much good humour and good sense for me to believe that he would attempt to maintain in argument or justify in action this outworn creed of Bogey Man.

A man who is self-centred may command men, but he will not lead them ; and unless he is careful to conceal his love for himself—or recover from it—he will be hated. Machiavelli writes in his “ Prince ” :

“ Armed prophets conquer, those who are unarmed are ruined. Because the nature of peoples is changeable, and while it is easy to persuade them of a thing, it is difficult to maintain them in the same persuasion. Therefore it is well to arrange things so that when

people no longer believe, they could be made to believe through force."

My only comment after reading this kind of stuff would be: "Tell that to the Horse Marines!"

The sort of ruler who says that to earn liberty you must deserve it, may be all right in Italy, but would not survive a week in most countries. We in these Islands look upon freedom as our birthright, and by habit of mind, custom, and legislation intend to preserve it. But whatever the Italians may think, so much rubbish and fiction is written and spoken about all famous men that I preferred to suspend judgment and wait until I had seen Signor Mussolini before forming any opinion of him.

Insight into the character of mankind needs qualities of head, heart and mind which few possess. Observation is as different from perception as originality from eccentricity, or literature from journalism. To arrive at a right conclusion in studying men and women, you must not only have a considerable amount of detached love to give your subject, but you must encourage this love. Charity and love are not the same, in spite of the modern version of the 13th chapter of the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Neither talking about people nor thinking about them will help you; it is *feeling for them*, and this is nature, and cannot be acquired except by practice in the habit of love.

Jeremy Taylor warns us of the shortness of life: "Strive not to forget your time and suffer none of it to pass undiscerned." People take up much too much of our time, therefore it is wasted if we en-

dure them without understanding them ; nor need you imagine that the more dislikes you have the more you are able to love, for the reverse is the truth. You can never develop yourself except through interest in human nature and knowledge of other people. The power to love is rare and can only be increased by usage.

“ There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford,” is a famous saying, which, reduced to a platitude, means we are all more or less subject to like temptations. Temptation is never a sin, and though we pray not to be led into it, those who do not stray are usually of thin nature and little impulse, unless they are of God’s saints—and how many of these do we meet or recognize when we do meet? I have no doubt that if Christ were to come down on earth to-morrow, He would be exposed to a more modern form of crucifixion. You must have something spiritual in you to recognize a saint, and few of us can say that any of our talk to anyone (except, perhaps, to children) on any day of the year is “ in Heaven.” The habit and custom of most good conversation about people is to point out—with uneven wit and unconscious malice—the doings and defects of our neighbours. This does not encourage love and is blinding to insight.

One adverse criticism that was expressed by everybody upon Mussolini was that he saw too little of his superiors and was not well surrounded.

“ Proverbs are generally true, madame, and no one can deny that ‘ Birds of a feather flock together,’ ” was said to me by one of the more intellectual habitués of high Roman Society. I answered that no doubt there

was a kind of truth in a few proverbs, but many of them were misleading.

“For instance,” I said, “‘A rolling stone gathers no moss’ is incomprehensible to me ! If you do not move either mentally, morally, or spiritually, you gather little, and most heirs to great responsibilities are taken round the world to improve their minds. If the saying is directed against the moss it is equally perverse, as those who remain what they were without putting anything on to themselves are failures. ‘There is no smoke without fire,’ has been repudiated by everyone of experience, and I have known a social incendiary without a puff of smoke—of which you have had some experience in Rome—where the perpetrator ought to be ‘doing time’ now.”

He did not contradict me, but asked if I would add to a collection he had made, by writing in a book, any saying or proverb that I had myself originated.

I gave him a choice of four that I had composed in the train:—

“To stick to an opinion is the privilege of fools.”

“To pursue war after conquest is to invite contempt.”

“He must be a great saint who goes into the world unarmed.”

“There are many signs of the Cross could we but see them.”

He selected the last, and, returning to the subject of Mussolini, asked me if any of the famous men I knew in England preferred the society of their inferiors. I confess I have often wondered why remarkable men in every country prefer the society of undistinguished people. The bedrock of this

preference is no doubt vanity or laziness : they seem to score with more ease and breathe with more freedom among their inferiors. But for the moment the famous men in England have played their cards so curiously that it would be as difficult as it would be heartless to discriminate between them and their inferiors, so I gave a guarded reply.

I was interested to hear from a less prejudiced and more accurate observer who joined our conversation that, although grateful to his early supporters, the Italian Prime Minister, in spite of some of his surrounders, was under the influence of nobody.

After many discussions, this is what I learnt of Benito Mussolini :

He was the son of a blacksmith, and was born in the village of Doria in the province of Forli in 1883. He was educated in the College of Forlimpopoli, and in 1902 went to Switzerland, where he became a bricklayer and a journalist. He had always been a strong and active Socialist, and after many experiences became the editor of the Socialists' official Party organ known as the *Avanti*.

At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, when the Italian Socialists were in favour of strict neutrality, his paper did not pronounce itself either for or against their decision : but in October of the same year he resigned the editorship, declaring that everyone should fight on the side of the Allies, as it was a spiritual cause over which no great country could afford to remain neutral. For this he was expelled from the Socialist Party, and he started his famous newspaper the *Popolo d'Italia*, and not only wrote but preached

the duty of every Italian, whether military or civilian, to take up arms against the Prussians.

In 1915, he enlisted as a private in a Bersaglieri regiment and was dangerously wounded in the stomach, which obliged him to return to his own country.

Italy had been in a state of internal convulsion for some time, and when the War was over it shared to a greater degree the rot, restlessness, and excitement that other nations were suffering from. High falutin' speeches were made about the millennium for working men, and it was only natural that after the dull, dangerous, and tragic life it had been living in the trenches, Labour all over Europe thought it had the right to rest, and await the fulfilment of many promises made by foolish and head-turned ministers.

The Italian Government was frail and confused, and no one knew what it stood for. Weakness in high places succumbed to violence in low, and the country was in danger of becoming what is vaguely known as Bolshevik.

The word Bolshevism has often puzzled me. Foolish and frightened persons, without insight or vision, use it freely, but—while writing and speaking with the heedless violence of the people they denounce—they are not interested in the causes of the disease. They know it is a Russian word, and that after the overthrow of the Tsar the Bolsheviks—who succeeded him—massacred their rulers, stole private property, and, in a frantic desire to restore freedom, destroyed order. It is easy for the scaremongers to point to this object lesson, but do they know what was happening in Russia before the revolution?

I remember King Edward many years ago telling me he had warned his nephew to encourage a spirit of Liberalism among his advisers ; that the suppression of free speech and constant deportation to Siberia of young men of good family for discussing with one another the most level-headed opinions, as well as the political corruption so evident in the Russo-Japanese war, could lead to nothing but misery for other people and sorrow for himself. When the Benckendorffs were appointed to the Russian Embassy in London, in my first private conversation with that most remarkable of women—the widow of Count Benckendorff—she told me that revolution stared Russia in the face unless the *régime* of the Tsar was reconstituted from top to toe. But not a word of protest went out from pulpit, pamphlet or peer in those days, and it was only when the selfishness of the big employers in this country was challenged by long-suffering working-men that the Dukes, the Die-Hards, and the “ first-class brains ” pulled Labour together to a man by braying “ Bolshevism ! ”

It would be wiser to suspend judgment. For centuries, good governments under a wise constitution have made the British people the most orderly in the world, and eight years is too short a time for the most apathetic of races to recover from the superstition and ignorance with which the people had been governed, added to which the Russians are artists and Oriental.

No one can doubt that the Italians were in danger of becoming Revolutionists. Justice, order and the rights of property were defied, and the nation was falling down as others had before, from the

selfishness, apathy and lack of conviction of its rulers.

Some of the more energetic of the younger generation could not stand what was going on, and formed a Party of their own called the Fascisti—a strong Conservative reaction, which by the wisdom of the King of Italy was not crushed—and Mussolini put himself at the head of this Party. He had learnt a great many things since he left Doria, both in Switzerland and during the War, and was convinced that, in spite of many cruel acts, the Fascisti were on the right road to save Italy from a terrorism that was ruining her.

On October 25, 1922, he addressed a great meeting of his followers at the Assembly of the Fascisti in Naples before their march upon Rome. He said :

“ All Italy is looking towards our assembly. Let me tell you, without that false modesty which is often only the mask of imbecility, that since the War there has not been an event more interesting, more original, and more powerful than Italian Fascismo.”

He denounced rule by majority and said in a speech the same year :

“ Numbers are contrary to reason.”

(When I think of our 1918 Election and the number of sheep-like people who voted for the continuance of the Coalition, I could almost agree with him.)

Fascism became for him a religion. Italy must return to her great past, and the only man who could confer this doubtful benefit upon his country was himself.

By his will-power and energy, Mussolini—from what I have heard—seems to have assimilated and



made use of the strongest elements in Italy. He has established an alliance not only with the King, the generals, administrators, and diplomatists, but also with the Vatican. Roman Catholicism has always approached God indirectly. The conscience of the individual is taken over by the middlemen, lulled and controlled through the Confessional upwards, and whatever else the Pope may be—whether scholar, saint, or teacher—he is at the end of it all the Super-middleman; the Italian Prime Minister was well advised when he realized the importance of making him his ally.

Like American speculators, Mussolini seems to have made a corner in all the Powers—civil, religious, and military—of his own country, and after hearing so much I felt I would be extremely foolish if I did not make some effort, before leaving Rome, to meet him.

I had missed the Prime Minister's speech delivered at a vast mass meeting—on March 23rd—unfolding his electoral programme, a speech heralded by silver trumpets, and acclaimed by everyone I met as the greatest public pronouncement made since Cicero. I did not regret missing it, as such translations of his oratory as I have read do not appeal to me (the "Great I Am," as our oddman called a swaggering fellow-servant, is apt to make me yawn or smile); but although I was late for the speech, I was not too late to hear glowing accounts of Mussolini's daring, not merely with revolutionary men but with wild animals.

For some months past, all Rome had been thrilled by seeing a young lion sitting on the box-seat of his

motor-car, and though for domestic reasons he had to present his pet ultimately to the Zoological Gardens, he paid it periodical visits, going into the cage, and playing with it in his arms to the delight of enraptured onlookers.

We in England do not understand this sort of thing. We have a passion for understatement and receive every form of public gesture with suspicion. The Latin races are different ; they always have a tempera-  
ture, but this is hardly, perhaps, a reason for such monotonous misunderstanding. Our foreign policy since the Armistice has been so trackless and obscure that we cannot afford to be inconsiderate to anyone, and we might do worse than cultivate an open mind towards what we call " foreigners," though no one will deny that certain countries are difficult to handle.

Inaccurate phrases hall-mark nations in the same manner as they sum up men. The French are " logical," the Italians " impulsive," the English " cold," and the Americans " quick," etc.

The French need money and security. Occupying the only part of Germany that, left to itself, could have produced the money to pay their debt may have been right, but it is not " logical " ; and as far as security goes, Euripides says :

" It is a good thing to be rich, and a good thing to be strong; but it is better to be beloved of many friends."

The Italians, so far from being impulsive, are cool-blooded and deliberate. The British are arrogant (though, with many other faults, they are the only nation I have yet encountered who have a fundamental sense of justice).

And kind as all Americans are, can anyone say they are quick ?

If you are going to sum up either nations or individuals accurately, you must have insight, sympathy and knowledge, or be as witty as Voltaire, and the Almighty is too good a handicapper to allow anyone to have all these advantages.

After hearing about the speech, the trumpets, and the lion, I felt highly elated at finding myself sitting next to a friend of Signor Mussolini (who occupies some official position in the Government) at my first dinner party in Rome. He had extremely good manners, and was easy and interesting to talk to. He told me many interesting things about his chief, and we discussed European politics in a guarded but congenial manner.

After a little good-humoured disputation over some of the actions of the Italian Government, I told him how much I would like to meet his hero if such a thing were possible. At which my companion said :

“ Madame, he sees *no* one, rarely goes into Society unless obliged to, and has neither time nor inclination for conversation ; he is a lonely man carrying a big burden. His life is in constant danger from fanatics, and he is the despair of all surveillance, dodging detectives and eluding the police, because he does not know what fear means. I regret, but what you ask is impossible.”

I began to think that, perhaps, this little man was a little too big for me to meet and felt discouraged ; but before turning to my other neighbour I was determined to make one final effort. Pulling myself together, I said with a sweet smile :

“ I do not think you will convince me of your intimacy with this great man if you cannot manage to make me meet him.”

Two days after this—on March 25th—our Ambassador came to my room to tell me that Mussolini’s secretary had rung up to say he would see me at six-thirty that evening.

I put on a black hat and black cloak and went to the Foreign Office—a building called Palazzo Chigi—with a card of our Ambassador and the name of the Ministerial Secretary I was to ask for upon my arrival written upon it.

I was taken up in a lift and asked to wait, as Signor Mussolini had a string of people, some of whom he was obliged to see. I was ten minutes before my time, and sat down in a high room with a fine roof and moderate Old Masters hung upon the marble walls. Among those who were waiting I observed an elderly gentleman walking restlessly about with his arms folded behind him, clasping large envelopes in his hands and taking himself very seriously. He glanced at me over his shoulder with suspicion and resentment, and continued his circular walk, looking first up at the ceiling with an expression of hope and then down at the floor with a frown.

Messengers came in and out, and at six-thirty the secretary—a man of charming manners and perfectly dressed—pulled up one of the white Empire chairs covered with orange leather (which were placed at intervals round the walls) and sat down beside me. He said his chief apologized, but as he never allowed anyone to engage his attention for more than two minutes he would surely be with me immediately.

We had an excellent talk—after the old gentleman had left the room—and at his request I explained, as well as I could, the state of affairs in the country and in the House of Commons at home.

When ultimately the door opened and I was ushered into the presence of Signor Mussolini, I confess to a feeling of some trepidation. I express myself well in English, moderately in French, and do not understand a single word of Italian.

The room was large and endlessly dark except for two brilliant lights on a huge writing table, which was littered with mountains of papers. Signor Mussolini was sitting on the edge of the table reading a newspaper; he put it down at once and came forward to meet me. Pulling up two chairs, we both sat down opposite one another. He wore grey whipcord knee-breeches and black top-boots, and has a well-knit, muscular figure. His eyes are very fine, and every part of him—from his hair to his hands—expresses life, added to which he has one of the most beautiful voices I have ever heard. I was surprised to find him so un-selfconscious, easy and humorous, and above all so courteous.

Great men are often lacking in this, and, if not very great, cultivate rudeness, hoping to impose upon small fry and give an impression that bad manners and genius go hand in hand and must ultimately make them a Napoleon. Poor Napoleon! He has been responsible for the failure of many of the most promising young men of my time.

(L'Abbé Mugnier said to me once :

“ Alas, Madame, too many people, both at the time and afterwards, wanted to be like Napoleon

—one might almost say he shared the view himself, and it was this that finally destroyed him.”)

Signor Mussolini asked me many searching questions about our General Election and Ministry, and said he had only been in London four days for “the malheureux Conference” in which Mr. Bonar Law gave his blessing while withholding his approval of the French policy in the Ruhr. I felt I also could say something about the Italian policy at this time, but thought it would be wiser for me not to pursue the topic.

We explored with caution and frankness the susceptibilities and ambitions of different nations, and their various policies since the Armistice. He asked me if we in England understood what had been happening in Italy. I said possibly we might, but that, not being in Downing Street, I only knew by what I read in the newspapers, and these were seldom informing. After praising with great sincerity the enormous improvements he had effected in his own country, I added :

“I am afraid, Signor Mussolini, that, however well informed I might be about your country, I shall find myself in total disagreement with you when I say I have both a horror and a contempt for all rule by force. Imprisoning and terrorizing people is not a sign of power ; it is a confession of failure, unless, of course, it is a painful expedient necessitated by a temporary upheaval.”

I am not sure he understood my French, but he defended himself, and said it was not a personal matter. I answered :

“Although you and I may have little self-know-



Myers





ledge, we all *have* a Self, and our actions are the outcome and issue of that Self, and you cannot repudiate your responsibility."

I could see he was not listening. He became eloquent in his views of what was most likely to develop nations, and pointed out to me, with youthful energy and unquestioning belief, that Italy was at its greatest when there were perpetual internal feuds—family fighting against family, State against State, quartier against quartier, but that he was not really fond of force. In his view it could only be morally justifiable subject to three conditions.

I pulled my chair closer to his and felt sure I should hear theories of profound and Machiavellian sophistry to justify some of the violent and foolish actions of the Italian Government, but with the kindest of expressions—and I thought a slight twinkle in his eye—he asked me searchingly if our Government had always been guiltless of using force. Remembering "Official Reprisals in Ireland," and feeling profoundly uncomfortable, I hastily urged him to give me his three conditions.

"Well," he said, "my first condition is important; it must be chivalresque—nothing under-hand, all done in the open. (2) It must be like good surgery—*pour guérir et non pas pour détruire*. (3) Above all, force must be used at the right moment, neither too soon nor too late."

Machiavelli faded away, and I saw in front of me a vital, energetic man, full of belief in himself, and not impervious to the opinion of other people.

I pointed out that his first condition was one of manners; that if you were drowning a cat, whether

the water was cold or warm was a matter of indifference to the victim. The second no doubt was moral, but the third was pure expediency.

His answers were full of humour and resource, and he was never pedantic or copious.

Turning the conversation abruptly, he asked me if I had enjoyed being in America. I told him how amazingly hospitable the American people had been to me, and we moved on to their inelastic Constitution and self-scanned and suburban outlook upon affairs other than their own. He asked me if I thought American men were passionate and courted women much. I said they were always at the end of a telephone, otherwise I imagined they were much like the rest of mankind.

He told me he loved animals and children and hated Society. We discussed the manners and gallantry of the various nations, and then I observed him turn his head and look at something in the dark end of the room.

"What are you looking at?" I asked.

Signor Mussolini: "Oh, only at the door."

"It is better than looking at your watch," I said; realizing we had been talking for nearly an hour, I added: "Perhaps there is a clock near the door."

He told me he was in no hurry and asked me to stay, but, fearing to bore him, I said I had kept him too long already and got up. He accompanied me down the long room talking, laughing, and loitering on the way. We parted with some idea of meeting once more before I left Rome, but I did not see him again.

I have an unbeglamoured mind, and have seen too many pocket Napoleons and public favourites to be easily imposed upon; but I left the Palazzo Chigi feeling I had seen a very rare man.

No one can doubt that Mussolini, in spite of fundamental defects, has done great things for Italy. My fear for him would be that like all converts, or perverts, his new Faith may make him forgetful of his old, and this is a great danger. Repression is not power.

Liberty without order can never be freedom; but order without liberty is demoralizing, and it remains to be seen whether force does not defeat its own ends and ultimately produce the same state of affairs in Italy that Fascism was created to destroy.

## CHAPTER IV

### I RETURN HOME

*Paris—Lord Crewe—Comments on French and American politics—  
The King and Queen of Roumania.*

Our foreign holiday was drawing to an end when we arrived in Paris ; we stayed at the British Embassy.

I do not propose to write what I think about Lord Crewe, but in case I am killed in the Place de la Concorde—where motors, 'buses, char-à-bancs, and taxis cross, meet, pass, and aim at each other with incredible speed—I would like to say he is the wisest man I have ever met. It does not matter what subject you may discuss—whether literature, politics, manners, or persons—he sees things from every angle, and expresses in perfect English, with knowledge, humour and insight, a balanced and penetrating opinion.

When we were alone, we had many discussions upon old and current politics. His belief in the future of Liberalism, and its uncollected power in England to-day, was of the deepest interest to me. For a man of rank and culture, it is remarkable that neither our Ambassador nor Lady Crewe have swerved in their political faith. There is nothing more fashionable

to-day in England than to abuse the Liberal Party ; but before taking this attitude too seriously, it is obvious that both the Labour and Conservative Parties have strong motives for desiring that the Liberals shall fail. Over four and a half million people voted for us at the General Election of December 1923, and if we had a representative system which gave the three Parties a fair chance, the prospects of the Liberal party in the country would be quite as good as those of the other two. Except in Italy, there has been a reaction from the Right all over Europe, and I should not be surprised if it does not ultimately affect France.

When we arrived, M. Poincaré had reformed his government, and the whole talk turned on the coming elections and his personal position. In 1923, a clever professor in Granada said to me :

“ I see, madame, you think the whole of France is behind M. Poincaré. I rather doubt this. In Paris no doubt it is true, but do you think the large capitals of any nations reflect true opinions? Here in Spain, we have no public opinion that can be expressed—why, I do not know, but I myself think there is a great deal of silence behind M. Poincaré in France, and that nursing and pursuing a policy of such obstinate revenge will lose him many friends.”

I told him that I loathed force as much as I despised fear, and that we had had a very good example of both in our own country. The futility—apart from the immorality—of it in “ Official Reprisals ” in Ireland lost us many friends. I said that Lord Hugh Cecil had written an excellent letter to *The Times* in which he said : “ One must not even murder a

murderer ”; that the French were Tories and militarists at heart, and that in the case of Poincaré they had found a man after their own hearts (added to which the Germans had shown a lack of wisdom, foresight, and honour that was deplorable). He maintained his point, and said he was convinced that the French were—though unreasonable—a much more sensible nation at heart than was generally supposed ; that he felt certain that when the franc fell they would blame Poincaré, and that there were duties to nations as well as to individuals ; and wondered which was the easier to perform, the first or the second.

It takes a discerning person to distinguish between what is one's duty and what is one's interest in keeping on good terms with neighbours. Lady Dorchester—a very clever old lady—said :

“ Of course, we should never have been told to love our neighbours in the Bible if they had not always been odious.”

The Dowager Lady Aylesbury was staying with me at Althorp, where I was hunting with the Pytchley hounds—a guest of Lord Spencer's—and in the course of conversation with her, I said I had observed with admiration how sweet she always was to young girls when they came out in London Society.

“ I find it much easier to get on with boys of that age, Lady Aylesbury,” I said. “ They are busier and gayer, and play games, and love rough country life, and don't think so much about who likes them or who does not. It is better to know whom you like in life than who likes you. Women take their degree in society—men don't.”

“ You are wrong, my dear,” she answered. ‘ Always be nice to girls ; you never know who they will become.’ ”

I did not dilate on this to the Spanish Professor, but turned the subject of our talk from France to America, and her conception of her duty to her neighbour.

I had been interested in a letter I had read in the *New York Evening Post*. Whether rightly or wrongly, it was reported in the Press that our late American Ambassador—Colonel Harvey—*apropos* of the Græco-Italian situation in the autumn of 1922, had said his countrymen were “ damned well out of it.” This provoked an answer signed “ Van Tassel Sutphen, Morristown, New Jersey ” :

“ ‘ Damned well out of it ’ is a trenchant phrase, and naturally Mr. Harvey believes that the utterance is entirely original with him. Not so, however. Here is a distinct case of unconscious mental cerebration, for some two thousand years ago a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves who stripped him of his raiment and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. (And as he went, he doubtless murmured into his beard : ‘ Damned well out of it.’) And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. (And as he goes we can hear him echoing the now familiar sentiment : ‘ Damned well out of it.’) Nearly twenty centuries have

passed away, and the poor painted shades of priest and Levite have long since vanished into the limbo of departed spirits—damned well out of it. But the radiant presence of the Good Samaritan, clothed with its glorious heritage of eternal life, abides with us for ever.

“ ‘ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ? ’ asked Jesus.

“ ‘ He that shewed mercy on him,’ was the reply of the lawyer.

“ Then said Jesus unto him, ‘ Go and do likewise.’ ”

. . . . .

America is going through a critical period, and needs another Lincoln to guide her out of the stagnation of self-interest if she is ever to make real progress.

Every European nation is interested in France, nor are they in a position to be severe upon her. (She had the misfortune to have three men representing her and her Allies who were incapable of working together for any right idea, and the Versailles Treaty showed every trace of selfishness, confusion, confiscation and blindness of heart.) I shall be interested to see if in the coming election my Granada professor was right when he said there was a good deal of silence behind the French Prime Minister.\*

. . . . .

Lord Crewe said to me that in discussing the merits and the faults of various nations, Sir Walter Raleigh

\* Since writing this and early after my arrival in England, Poincaré was beaten, Mussolini shaken and every Government and every nation is in a minority to-day (1924).



told him that an American staying with him in Oxford had said :

“ D’you know what differentiates you from other nations ? I guess you are the only people in the world who say, ‘ Keep the change.’ ”

In view of the coming elections, the whole time I was in Paris I heard nothing but politics discussed. Mr. McKenna and Mr. Dawes had arrived from Germany and speculation was rife over their Report. I would much like to have known about it, but our Ambassador—restrained in matters of gossip whether upon people or affairs—merely told me that he thought the Report was thorough, and that he was sanguine enough to think it would meet with agreement. I gather that our man, Sir Josiah Stamp, was the true author of its success.

. . . . .

Before we left Paris, the King and Queen of Roumania arrived for their first State visit since the War.

Most towns are ruined by street decorations. Too many policemen, too little music, and an ill-assortment of coloured bunting on balconies are moderate rewards for the fatigue you go through before finding your place on a hard chair in a crowded window. But a défilé in the Champs Elysees is worth all the fatigue. I stood on the balcony of the Princesse de Polignac’s beautiful house and watched the crowd, the soldiers, and the horses, and listened to the Roumanian National Anthem and the Marseillaise as the King and Queen, the President, M. Poincaré, and the Government, passed in a hurricane of cheers.

The Queen of Roumania is not only beautiful, gracious and kind, but she is alive and interested. She enjoys everything and carries her own happiness with her. Beautifully dressed she turned her little head with circulating smiles to the delight of an enraptured crowd and waved her bouquet at them.

I sat next to the King of Roumania at Princess George Bibesco's one night at dinner, and had an excellent talk with him. He is a great gentleman as well as a man of sense and simplicity. We were a small party—the daughter of the house and her English governess and M. Duca—the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the King. After dinner, we went to see a conjurer at the Marquis de Castellane's house, where an Oriental called "Gilly Gilly" made eggs come out of chickens and chickens out of eggs, and allowed such of the company who fancied it to pull yards and yards of flags and ribbons out of his mouth. The little chickens fluttered at our feet bringing a feeling of freshness and Spring in marked contrast to the dirty cotton clothes and solitaire-board complexion of the conjurer.

I watched the semi-stupid, highly fashionable audience—mostly English—and need hardly say most of them thought they knew how many of the tricks were done, but after watching their faces I felt pretty sure that not one of them could have put a single chicken into their pockets without wounding it, or any of the flags into their mouths without being discovered.

The King sat beside Marthe Bibesco in a central position, and took the chickens in his hands.

Before making my final curtsy, I told him we were looking forward to his visit to us in London, and he



H.M. THE QUEEN OF ROUMANIA.



said he hoped he would be able to have a talk with my husband.

Our holiday was over, and we were glad that Lady Crewe—who had been away recuperating from a severe illness—returned in time for us to express our gratitude to her and her husband for our unforgettable visit.



REFLECTIONS UPON  
LIFE AS I SEE IT, 1925





# REFLECTIONS UPON LIFE AS I SEE IT, 1925

## CHAPTER I

### FAMILY LIFE

*The London Season—"Glen" and "The Wharf"—Drink Control versus Birth Control—London—The Problem of Life.*

It is a long time ago—or it seems so—since my holiday was over, and events have shaped themselves strangely.

It is a mistake to suppose that time passes slowly in the country and quickly in a London season. Nothing devours time like regularity of life. August, September, and October—when we are all together in the holidays—pass like a flash, whereas in London it is not an exaggeration to say you can live a lifetime in a few weeks. So many things happen and of such a varied kind that you can hardly remember whom you sat next to at dinner, or with whom you afterwards played bridge. You say to your husband while you are dressing :

"It was fun last night ! I was lucky to be next to Birrell ; he was in great form. Who did you have ? "

He replies : " I had a capital talk on racing with Lady ——, who is an expert, but I caught her out in the dates of Rosebery's two Derbys."

" Who was on the other side ? " I ask.

" That I couldn't tell you. I think it was your American friend, Mrs. ——. Oh, no ; she was here at lunch. How did you get on at bridge ? Who were your four ? "

I answer vaguely :

" Ava and I were the women ; we began with Sir Hamilton Grant and Mr. Foster. Another man cut in—I can't remember who it was . . . How I wish you had been at Wimbledon! The best man's four you ever saw! Williams and Washburn against Borotra and Lacoste in the Centre Court . . . Don't forget Watty and Williams come to the Wharf on Sunday. A man we all know helped me to find the motor and said your speech on the salary of the Minister for Labour was the most brilliant thing he ever heard . . . What? . . . We shall be late for dinner? . . . All right, Bella! . . . Someone wants to speak to me? . . . Take me off the telephone . . . Say I'm in my bath . . . Ask who it is—Very important—to see me about Mr. Lloyd George's speech? . . . You've got it wrong! . . . Who? . . . You can't hear? . . . Tell him to spell it . . ."

We are rung off.

No. Time passes when you are leading a country life. And when the tulips are taken up, the cuckoo is hoarse, and the may fades off the thorns, I am torn between London and The Wharf, and count the hours till my daughter Elizabeth will

be on the *Aquitania* and my second holiday will have begun.

. . . . .

Much as I had enjoyed myself travelling under perfect conditions, chaperoned by my son and entertained by such hosts as our Ambassadors in Paris and Rome, I felt a sense of exhilaration on arriving in England.

I never see the pale shadows and chalk cliffs of Dover with their blue skies and white clouds above them, without thinking of the thousand eyes from the incoming ships, and all the thoughts—too deep for tears—that are behind those eyes.

I have had many experiences in a life more lived than spent. Happiness in girlhood, apprehension at becoming a stepmother, gratitude when I became a mother, excitement when my husband kissed hands,\* joy when my son got his scholarship, misery over the War, despair over the Peace, and a gnawing feeling all the time that what Tennyson wrote in “Ulysses” is true :

“All experience is an arch where-thro’  
Gleams that untravell’d world whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.”

But the permanent happiness of my life—of which no man can rob me—has been my two homes—Glen, before marriage, and The Wharf, after. Ever since I can remember, we were none of us happy at any entertainment till we had found one another, and at my first garden party at Marlborough House I was

\* When he became Prime Minister in 1908.

so exhausted trying to find Ribblesdale and Charty that when we did meet we voted we would go home.

Families may quarrel like cats, but if any of your relations turn up in any quarter of the globe, you feel a sort of happiness difficult to account for. I can only think it is because you are reminded of your home. You can say clever things about almost anything but home, and to describe this there is no language. Its structure is laid on sure and early foundations, and depends upon the mother for its success more than upon the view or the elevation. You may see it in slums, cottages, or castles, but, in spite of the fashionable science of eugenics or birth control, you are most likely to find it—after struggle and separation—in the large families.

When people say there are too many children born, I reply that the joy and hope of life lie at the feet of the children. If the population of countries depended on the rich, every country would be clamouring like France is, for Security, and I think it safe to say the selfishness of the rich can be depended upon not to produce the large families of past generations. It is through children and children alone that men and women are enabled to fight every inch of the way to despair.

If instead of birth control every one would preach drink control, you would have little poverty, less crime, and fewer illegitimate children. It is not crimes of fraud so much as crimes of violence that fill the prisons, I speak feelingly; for as my brother Harold John Tennant and I were the last of twelve children, it is more than probable we should never have existed had

the fashion of birth control been prevalent in the eighties. Sickly children bring out the best qualities in love and science, and if it is a question of poverty let anyone out of kindness of heart offer to take a child from an overburdened mother and see what the mother will say. It may be bad to have too many children, but it is worse to have too few, and an only child has nothing like the same chance in life as one who has brothers and sisters. The happiest marriages I have ever known have been those where love, nature, and common sense were in control; and the unhappiest where both the man and the woman knew too much.

. . . . .

I returned to London which people say is so large that it is in the end the most interesting place to live in. They do not say it is interesting for other reasons. They might, for instance, say with truth—that there are fewer bad pictures in our National Gallery than in any other in Europe; that we have fine trees in our parks and squares; that we have ancient and historical buildings; imposing but badly-constructed Law Courts; interesting Houses of Parliament; a beautiful river—described by Mr. John Burns in a fine phrase as “liquid history”; that in Rotten Row every one can see the riders and horses at close range (and form their own opinions on British horsemanship); that in spite of the journalistic reproduction of Nurse Cavell, a dumpy transformation of Florence Nightingale, and many dingy and ridiculous statues, we have Charles the First, Sydney Herbert, and the Quadriga by Captain Adrian Jones;

that in modern architecture we have the Piccadilly Restaurant and Automobile Club ; that Windsor Castle, Kew Gardens, Richmond Park, and Hampton Court are within easy distance of every Londoner. (You need not add that large vehicles of Premier Salt Co., Prime Beef Co., Schweppes Table Waters, Standard Bakeries, Ideal Laundries, Great Northern, Great Western and Midland vans plus pleasure lorries, block every street that has not been taken up for mending purposes in the height of every season.) No : nothing is said about the interesting things in London ; all they say is, it is the best place to live in because it is big.

You visit Venice, you pass through Edinburgh, you retire to Florence, you sight-see in Rome, you Easter in Spain, you shoot in Scotland, you fish in Canada, you go up to the Highlands, you go down to Cornwall, you stop at Didcot, you change at Swindon ; but you live in London.

Why does the size of the town give you a better chance of leading an interesting life ? I imagine it is because people of every occupation and all professions go into London society, and in little towns you cannot avoid meeting the same people every day of your life. Unconnected by love, but fettered by custom, in a fit of exhaustion you say—what a famous relation of my son-in-law, Antoine Bibesco, said :

“ Décidément je n’aime pas les autres.”

Familiarity without intimacy does not make for Love—the only bridge by which we can escape the estranging conclusion that perhaps, after all, we have been given incommunicable lives.

It is a difficult problem this matter of life, but I am sure you must face ideals and not fidget with them. People should be a study, Pleasure an interruption, Work a consolation, and Hope a duty.

Tolstoy warned "the Gropers"—as Countess Tolstoy called her husband's admirers—that it was always a danger to live a life that was higher than our conscience. I do not agree with him. When you consider how much of one's short time is spent in anxious pursuit of pleasure, in eating, drinking, sleeping, and bearing false witness, I should say the danger is of leading a life lower than our conscience. Rest, work and happiness make life, and many people never achieve any of these, but fluctuate without success between the three. It is a perpetual problem how to be in the world and not of it. The Roman Catholics think that by going into convents they can shirk their responsibilities. I do not want to die, but to live ; and no muttering of charms could make me believe that my prayers, or the prayers of anyone else, will placate a loving God, or save the soul of a single sinner. You cannot separate life from God or from love, and it is a fatal conception of either if you think you can serve them by running away.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICS, ORATORY AND CONVERSATION

*Words without Ideas—Free Trade—Lord Carson—Bishop Magee  
—Wordsworth's humour—Talk and Talkers.*

Resuming my normal London life, I found the House of Commons immensely dull. A lot of talking and thumping and nothing done, and the Opposition Front Bench full of Ministerial duds, whose names it would be heartless to mention. I had imagined that there were a few questions that Liberals would have assisted Labour to settle, and that after the speeches made all over the country by the Government, Labour had not only been thinking, but had got immediate schemes to remedy unemployment and other evils. I find I was wrong; they probably had many desires in their hearts, but had few ideas in their heads, and most of the things accomplished that Session were done by us. It does not much matter whether Smith or Brown do the things, but Jones and Robinson do not like it.

Words without ideas remain separate and leave no impress. The speeches of the Prime Minister not only made little impression, they left a sense



of noise and evasion in strange contrast to his speaking of former days. Vanity is a dangerous guide to learning, and I do not think the last Government was teachable. This, of course, is not confined to the Labour Party. The Tories have shown a curious lack of progress—not only individually, but collectively. No one really believes that they are not Protectionists at heart. When they say to me “Free Trade was all very well in the old days before there were so many people in these Islands, and before we depended so much on trade; when there was less competition, etc., etc.,” a feeling of despair comes over me; it seems as if a gulf—not only intellectual but moral—separates our Party from this kind of ignorance.

I ask them if they read Lord Inchcape’s letter of December 15th, 1923 (which probably had as much to do in influencing people’s votes in the ensuing Election as any speech). They say, “No.” And I show them this passage :

“Ours was the only trading system that stood the racket of the War. Alone among the European belligerents, we paid a large part of the cost of the War out of revenue.

“But besides this positive demonstration of the power of Free Trade, a negative proof was supplied by the complete collapse in all countries of the Protectionist scheme of finance. At the first touch of war all the elaborate tariff walls that our European Allies, as well as our enemies, had erected, were laid in ruins. Of agrarian Protection in Europe, the key-stone of the whole structure, scarcely a vestige remained when the War ended. All the

We arrived at St. Margaret's, and I felt happy sitting next to my splendid chief and watching the amazingly vital, powerful face of the preacher.

Lord Carson told me he knew the Bishop well, and that he was a man not only of eloquence, but of wit. He was ordered to Bournemouth for change and rest, and after a week was presented with his hotel bill, which he thought excessive.

After paying the head waiter, the proprietor approached him with a circulating smile, and said :

"It is our custom, your grace, to ask all visitors of distinction to write something in our visitors' book. May we hope you will confer a similar honour upon us ? "

At which Magee sat down and wrote "I came down here for rest and change: the waiter's got the change and the proprietor the rest."

Wandering from this to parsons and preachings, I asked him if he knew what my old friend, J. K. Steven had said when invited to discuss future life in an afternoon assembly of country curates.

After listening for some time to a lot of foolish vapourings, he said :

"Gentlemen, it is true what Wordsworth says : 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy,' but is that a reason why we should lie about Heaven in our middle age ? "

Good stories are told, but seldom printed, and such collections as I have read have been disappointing. The art of conversation, when it degenerates from discussion to story-telling, depends largely upon the comment made after the story. It takes a very clever person to carry on in the disturbing silence which falls upon the company when it has been amused by a



LADY VIOLET BONHAM-CARTER AND HER SON MARK



good story. It was said of Malibran, “ *Sa conversation avait des lendemains délicieux* ” : this is more than can be said of most raconteurs. People are separated more than they think by a different taste in jokes ; but nothing makes me more shy than listening to a certain sort of story. I forgive the people who do not laugh, but the explosions as of a sense of humour taken by surprise when a moderately funny story is told, has a depressing effect upon me.

Mr. Gladstone interested me by telling me that Wordsworth had said he did not suppose he had a good sense of humour, but that he had once said a funny thing :

“ I shall be curious to see whether you find it amusing, and will relate it to you, my dear Margaret, as it was told to me,” said Mr. Gladstone. “ Wordsworth was walking in a country lane pondering over serious matters, when a labourer came up to him, and said in an excited manner : ‘ Have you seen my wife ? ’ To which he replied : ‘ I did not know you were married. ’ ”

I confessed that as the acid test of a man’s claim to a sense of humour I thought the Wordsworth remark far from satisfying.

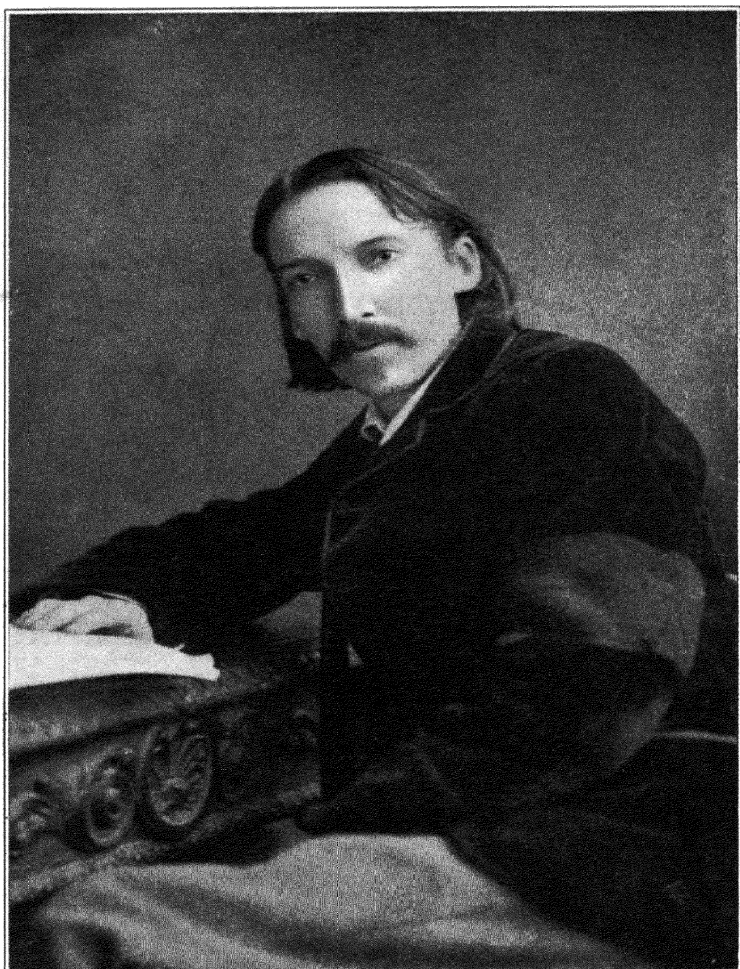
I am a nervous listener, and enjoy the accidental flashes that come into good conversation more than any set story. My friend Lady Islington, my niece Barbara Wilson, my daughter Elizabeth Bibesco, and my stepdaughter Violet Bonham-Carter, always amuse me ; but by nature I have a lingering sense of laughter even when I am amused. Sometimes I wish I had known the English King who never smiled again. Gravity has more charm than looks

for me in people, and some of the wittiest men I have ever known seldom laughed—Lord Rosebery, Godfrey Webb, Sir Charles Bowen, the Marquis de Soveral, Raymond Asquith, Teixeira de Mattos, and others I could mention. You can imitate almost anything but laughter, and I do not know a greater social drawback than to be born with a free-flowering smile. Prompted by “that Kruschen feeling,” the possessors of such a smile go about hoping to pick up a joke, or convey to others a friendly approach, but meaningless brightness leaves me cold, much in the same way as over-emphasis distracts my attention. I have never forgotten Mrs. Aubrey Herbert’s little girl saying of my dear friend, Countess Benckendorff:

“Who is the lady with the brown smile?”

Smiling and laughing are very different. If Lord Rosebery seldom laughs, he has the most beautiful smile I ever saw, and Sir Charles Bowen’s sleek manner and cautious smile gave point to his rapier remarks. There are some smiles that are danger signals, and others that are disarming. It is said of Napoleon that he seldom smiled, but Miss Viola Tree writes that his “Empire-destroying mind kept him at his maps,” and these are never very funny. Catherine of Russia, writing about her cousin Marie Antoinette said: “I hear she laughs too much.” Laurence Oliphant—who was a great friend of mine said he divided his world “into life-givers and life-takers,” and there is truth in this.

A noisy mind is as tiring as a loud voice, and you need something more than high spirits to give other people vitality.



Ever yours  
Robert Louis Stevenson.





Good conversation depends more upon keeping it general, and no one should be allowed to harangue. To be uninterruptible has a deadening effect, and even smart phrases are apt to cut off the heads of interesting topics. Mr. John Burns is one of the best talkers I have ever met, and no one can put forward a fanciful conception with more picturesque and original expression than Mr. Winston Churchill.

It is a fine art to subordinate the interest you are taking in how you express yourself to the subject under discussion ; and if you can add to that a desire to know what the listeners are thinking you will probably become a good talker. Lord Moulton, Lord Morley, Robert Louis Stevenson, and John Addington Symonds were among the best conversationalists I ever talked to, and the Master of Balliol (Jowett) made the most appreciative and caustic comments on what was said. Unless we are good writers or great thinkers, we shall in all probability talk too much ; therefore it is as well we should learn how to do it.



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